刺客列傳

彩色典藏本

◎附錄鄭問精采力作　最後的決鬥　劍仙傳奇

鄭問 編繪

第一部中國水墨漫畫

附史記原典 可看可讀

歷史人物 紙上復活

鄭問

刺客列傳

編繪

時報漫畫叢書 取材自史記《刺客列傳》

作者簡介

在清秀與粗獷之間

攝影 李明

[鄭問小檔案]

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❸插畫創作

❹漫畫創作

作品❶戰士黑豹(時報周刊連載，已出版單行本3冊)

❷戰士黑豹第二部

❸鬥神(時報周刊連載)

❹刺客列傳(歌樂漫畫半月刊連載)

❺吳甲元朗(時報周刊連載)

從戰士黑豹到刺客列傳

自序

從72年開在時報周刊連載「戰士黑豹」起，超過十年光陰過去了，我之所以不斷嘗試新的題材和表達方式，是想藉著不同的技巧和故事背景呈現我對漫畫的「新」的感覺，雖然每次運用不同的技巧，題材，每次在刊作初期都有許多未知的挫折困擾，不過都使自己不斷突破往前衛前的勇氣感覺，遠遠超過了這些新問題帶來的困難。

書名在「戰士黑豹」連載半月刊，連載的一系列短篇作品，像「最後的決鬥」等，使用的是西部牛仔故事，作畫中採用了許多不同的材料：包括服飾，槍械以表現背景肌理，在這些作品中，有些朋友認為是東洋味道，在我把古代造型與上漫畫新設定時，也不見有相同的看法，不過這些造型都是從歷代繪畫、雕刻而來，像「劍仙傳奇」中劍仙的服裝是採用吳道子永樂宮壁畫上的仙人造服，狐仙奇居的大佛則是出自大足石窟中的普賢菩薩。

這12篇作品在刊載期間幸運地受到讀者們的歡迎和漫畫界朋友的鼓勵，不過在邁到最後一記「刺客列傳」，卻發覺以往的表現技法，筆不適合表現刺客列傳所需要的感覺，用沾水筆來畫則大硬，用水彩刷又有點像中國繪畫中用交響樂來伴奏的不倫不類，因此停筆思考了一段日子，直到交稿期緊迫，突然有了一個靈感——為什麼不以中國技法來表現中國人的故事？於是我開始拿起毛筆來描繪出我心中

的刺客形象，說來有趣，以往國畫課第一個打瞌睡的我，竟然會選擇這麼作畫；而到現在，找才慢慢看到水墨獨特的味道，實在無可其它媒材取代，也證明我確定了一點，就是：中國水墨的可塑性，相信在不久的將來，水墨將成為中國建築裝飾的主流之一。

在刺客的造型中最引人爭議的是「蒙臉」的中性面孔，我當初設定的想法是為了使出陰毒殺客後的銀牡和馬氣，屍狗的狗臭總讓人把起肥帥，屠戶則把他塑新型造成武生形象引出他隱身市販的無奈，再出馬時的山崩地裂，則是虛構來加強感覺效果；在刺殺行動裡我並不特別表現血和武力，主要是把精髓的氣氛來揭托比劍客們壯烈悲的情懷，凡此種種，讀者若有心，可進一步從司馬遷「史記」原文，當會另有一番體認。

這套複畫是一個結合文學與劇場精神的綜合型衝，一個的故事在不同的視覺家手中，所呈現出來的作品都有他個別的感情和理念，很也是讓觀賞家感受百種投入的原因，這本專輯最後共花去我一千五百個小時，若說以前的作品是我用「腦力」所走成的，那麼「刺客列傳」即是我用「心」來打心作品。

最後，謹以此書獻給所有愛漫畫的讀者和漫畫天地裡的朋友。

一九八八、八、九于北

4

從戰士型豹

到刺客列傳　　**鄭問／**

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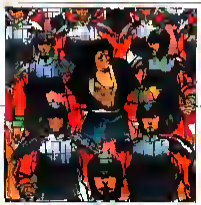
刺客傳列勇❸篇

【殊譯】



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【劍仙傳奇】

刺客列傳

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陳雪蓮／

ASSASSIN STORY 1

Cao Mao

曹沫，魯國人，因爲有勇力，臣事魯莊公。莊公喜歡有勇力的人，所以派曹沫當大將，和齊國交戰，結果三次都打了敗仗。魯莊公畏懼，因此獻上遂邑的土地，來換齊國講和，但仍以曹沫爲大將。齊桓公答應了，和魯國在柯這地方聚會，訂立盟約。

桓公與莊公在壇上訂立盟約後，曹沫卻拿著短劍要挾齊桓公。桓公左右的人，都不敢抗拒，問曹沫說：「你要什麼？」曹沫說：「齊國強，魯國弱，齊國侵略魯國，也太過分了。現在魯國城牆一被打壞，就要緊鄰齊國國界了。國君你也應該想一個呀！」……

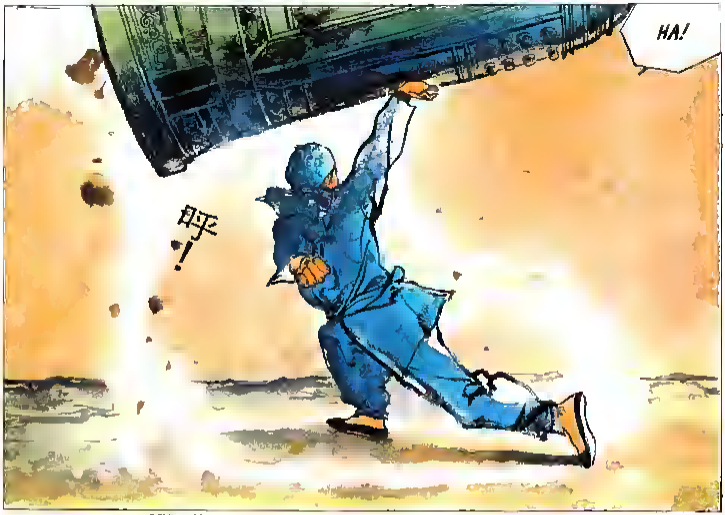
◉刺客列傳之一
曹沫
Cao Mo

YES!
THE TWO OF YOU HAVE MADE IT TO THE LAST ROUND WELL LIFTING!
AMONG THE ONE HUNDRED BRAVE COMPETITORS
NOW THE COMPETITION THAT'S HELD ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS HAS REACHED ITS CLIMAX
EVEN THOUGH THE POWER OF LU IS SMALL THE COUNTRY'S EMPEROR HAS AN INTEREST IN STRONG MEN HE OCCASIONALLY HOLDS WEIGHT LIFTING COMPETITIONS CHOOSES MEN FROM THEM AND GIVES THEM OFFICIAL DUTIES, MAKING THEM AN ASSET TO THE COUNTRY
COMPETITION.
HOWEVER —
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I'VE EMERGED AS A CHAMPION OUT OF THE CROWD THE LAST MATCH IS AGAINST THIS SKINNY GUY, *SIGH*—— EVEN IF I WIN, IT WOULDN'T BE GLORIOUS!

LU EMPEROR
GOOD! GOOD! I NEVER DREAMT THAT MY COUNTRY HAD SUCH A POWERFUL MAN!
I'VE WON!
ONE HAND? WHAT DOES HE MEAN?
DID THE SIGHT OF THE GIANT FELL SCARE HIM?
?
NEXT!

WHAT?! USING ONE HAND?!
TO REPLY MY LORD'S QUESTION, IT SEEMS THAT HE IS PLANNING TO LIFT THE BELL WITH ONE HAND!
FIELD OFFICER, WHAT IS HE ?
HE!
HA!

Sbc Hul

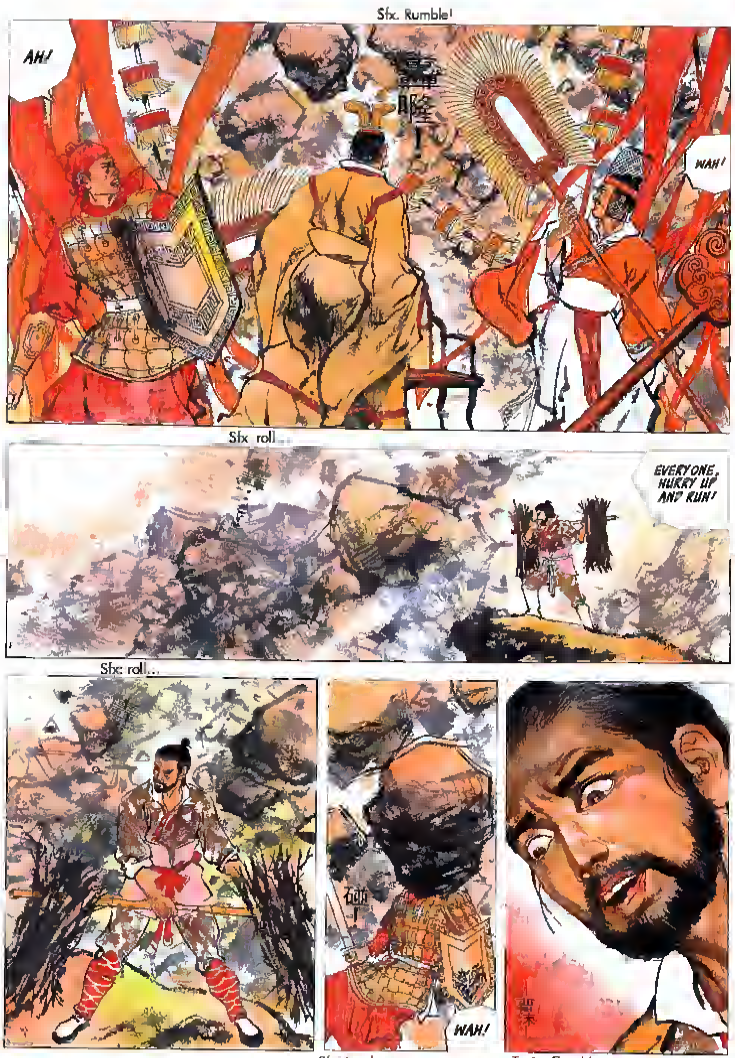

HA!
SFX: HU!

!

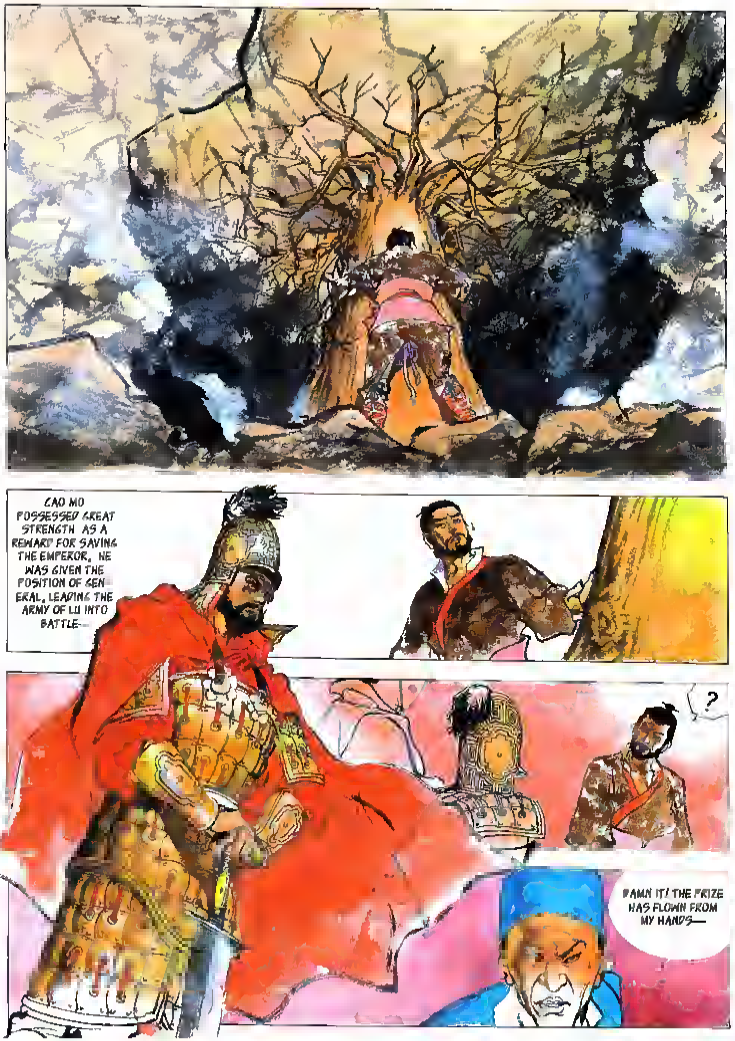
WAH!

A LANDSLIDE HAS OCCURRED, RUN!!

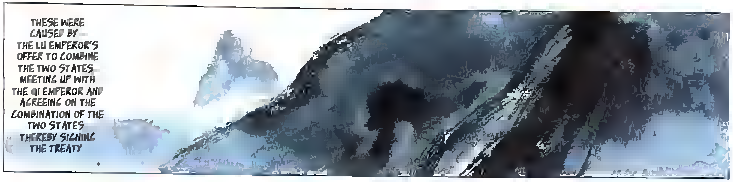
HA. YOU REALLY CAN'T JUDGE A PERSON BY APPEARANCES. IT SEEMS THE CHAMPION HAS ALREADY-

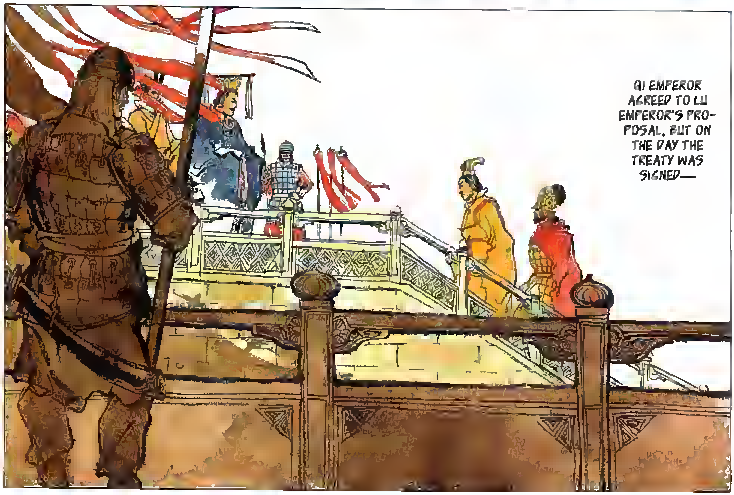

Sfx: Rumble!
AH!
WAH!
Sfx: roll...
EVERYONE, HURRY UP AND RUN!
Sfx: roll...
Sfx: touch...
WAH!
Text: –Cao Ma–

AH!
HE—
Sfx: Rumble!
轟隆!
Sfx: Crash!
嘩啦!
I'M DONE FOR
?


CAO MO POSSESSED GREAT STRENGTH AS A REWARD FOR SAVING THE EMPEROR, HE WAS GIVEN THE POSITION OF GENERAL, LEADING THE ARMY OF LU INTO BATTLE—
?
DAMN IT! THE PRIZE HAS FLOWN FROM MY HANDS—

DESPITE HOW STRONG THE ARMY OF LU WAS, CAO MO STILL FACED 3 DEFEATS—


THESE WERE CAUSED BY THE LU EMPEROR'S OFFER TO COMBINE THE TWO STATES, MEETING UP WITH THE QI EMPEROR AND AGREEING ON THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO STATES, THEREBY SIGNING THE TREATY

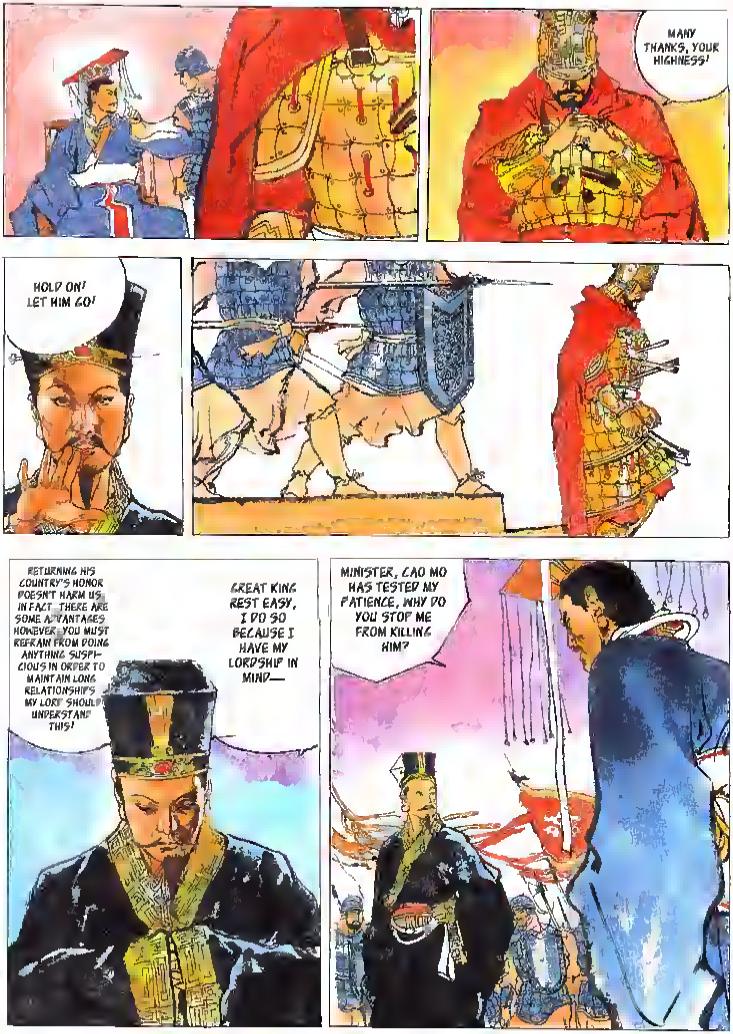

QI EMPEROR AGREED TO LU EMPEROR'S PROPOSAL, BUT ON THE DAY THE TREATY WAS SIGNED—

I..
YES INDEED—
BEHIND THE EMPEROR IS THE GREAT GENERAL ZAO MO?
— Qi Emperor —
PARDON, PARDON, MANY THANKS TO THE GREAT GENERAL ZAO FOR TESTING MY ARMY AND LEADING IT TO MANY GREAT VICTORIES
HA...
MANY THANKS, YOUR HIGHNESS
GOOD! GOOD! WITH THIS, THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL UNITE!

WAH!
GIVE UP!
YA!

SHA!
WU...
HA!

WAH!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
DON'T BE RASH!
THINK ABOUT IT, ONCE LU IS OUT OF THE WAY QI WON'T HAVE A BARRIER ANYMORE. THAT'S THE PAY WHEN OTHER STRONGER COUNTRIES WILL INVADE YOUR COUNTRY. DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THIS?
QI IS STRONG, LU IS WEAK AS A RESULT, QI HAS ALWAYS INVADED LU
AI! I SHALL RETURN YOUR COUNTRY'S HONOR TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE!


MANY THANKS, YOUR HIGHNESS!
HOLD ON! LET HIM GO!
RETURNING HIS COUNTRY'S HONOR DOESN'T HARM US. IN FACT, THERE ARE SOME ADVANTAGES. HOWEVER, YOU MUST REFRAIN FROM DOING ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN LONG RELATIONSHIPS. MY LORD SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS!
GREAT KING REST EASY, I DO SO BECAUSE I HAVE MY LORDSHIP IN MIND—
MINISTER, CAO MO HAS TESTED MY PATIENCE, WHY DO YOU STOP ME FROM KILLING HIM?

HN!

曹沫者，魯人也，以勇力事魯莊公。莊公好力。曹沫爲魯將，與齊戰，三敗北。魯莊公懼，乃獻遂邑之地以和，猶復以爲將。

齊桓公許與魯會于柯而盟。桓公與莊公既盟於壇上，曹沫執七首劫齊桓公，桓公左右莫敢動，而問曰：「子將何欲？」曹沫曰：「齊强魯弱，而大國侵魯亦甚矣。今魯城壞即壓齊境，君其圖之。」桓公乃許盡歸魯之侵地。既已言，曹沫投其七首，下壇，北面就羣臣之位，顏色不變，辭令如故。桓公怒，欲倍其約。管仲曰：「不可，人貪小利以自快，要信於諸侯，久天下之援，不如與之。」於是桓公乃遂割魯侵地，曹沫三戰所亡地盡復予魯。

其後百有一年而吳右其事者之帝。

CREDITS

RAW PROVIDER: OMINAE
TRANSLATOR: GPLUE
PROOF READER: DA-MANTA-RAY
CLEANER: DRAGON_FIRE1995
TYPESETTER: BLOODALCHEMIST
QUALITY CHECKER: LORD PAPER
RE-EDITOR: LORD PAPER

WE ARE STILL LOOKING TO RECRUIT CLEANERS AND TYPESETTERS, AND AS ALWAYS, TRANSLATORS.

ASSASSIN STORY 2

Chuan Zhu

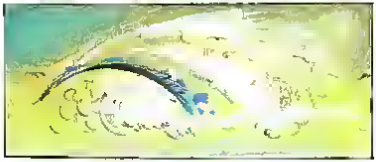
The young master bowed his head and said, "I would be honoured to serve you."

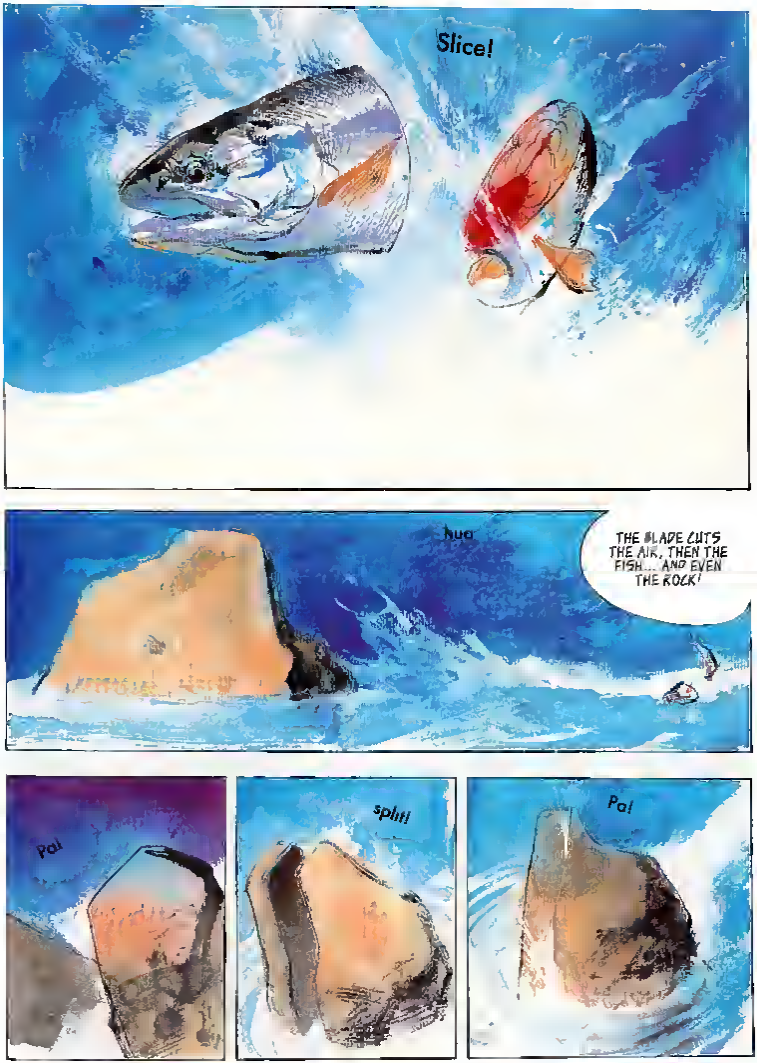
It was the third day of the fourth month. On this day, Prince Guan had already stationed armoured soldiers in the basement while preparing a rich wine feast and inviting the Wu King, Liao, to drink with him. King Liao sent his soldiers to form ranks, and the line ran from inside the palace into Guan's home. On the left and right of the gate and stairs were King Liao's relatives. The attendants standing on either side of King Liao held long spears in their hands. After they had drunk their fill, Prince Guan pretended that he had aching feet. He then walked into the basement and told Chuan Zhu to place a knife in the belly of the roasted fish and to carry it into the dining hall. When he stood before King Liao, Chuan Zhu split open the fish's belly...

swish
splash!
?
AH!

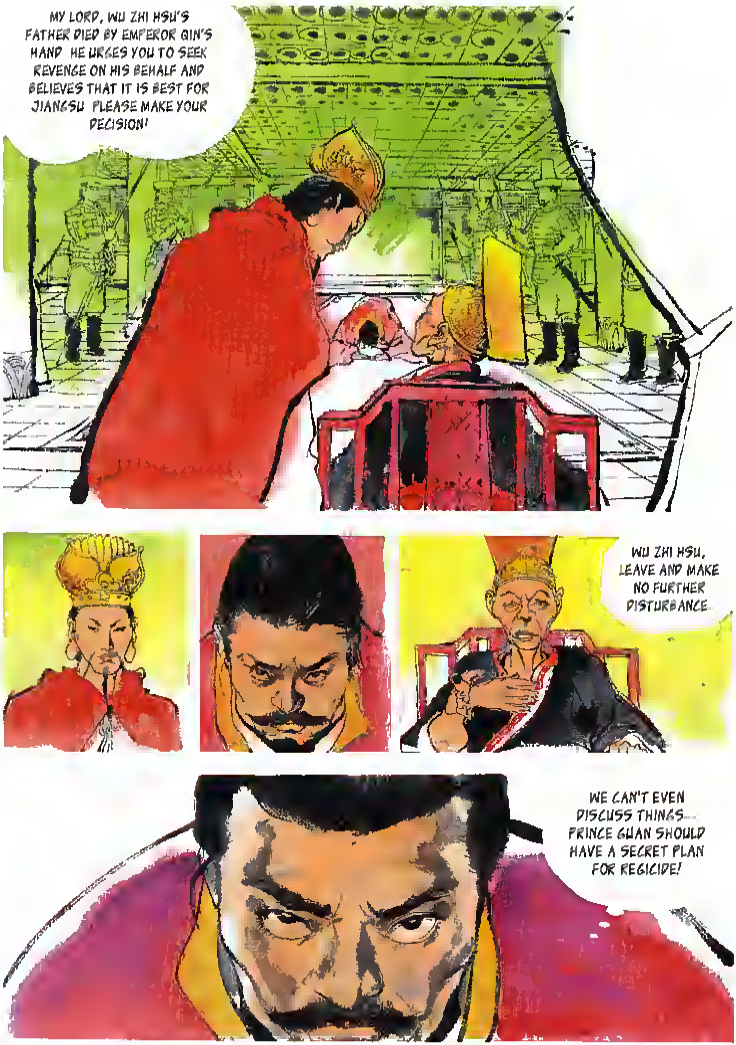
ASSASSIN STORY
CHAPTER 2

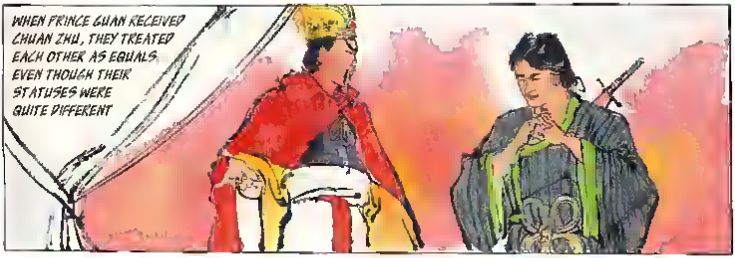
Chuan Zhu

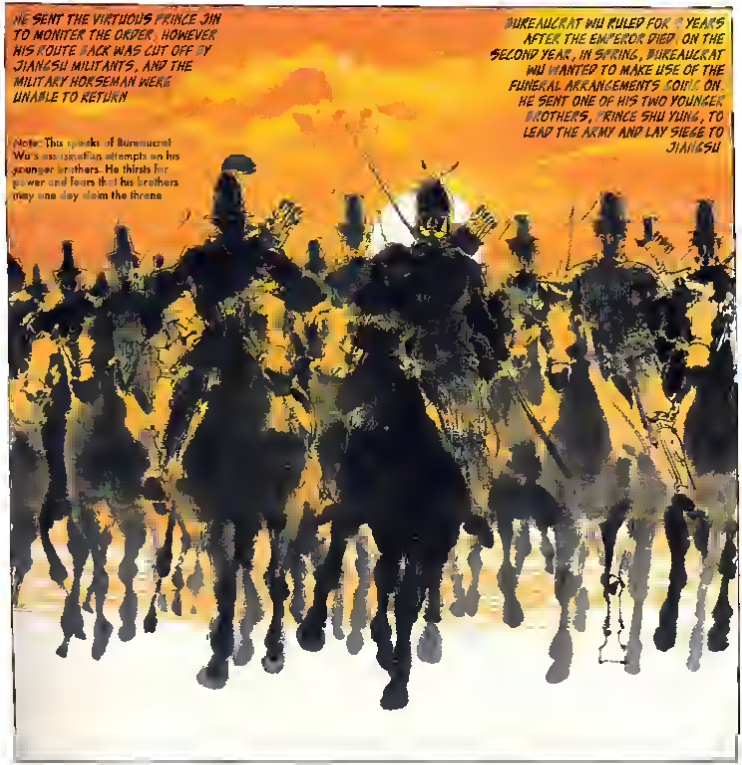



Slice!
Nua
THE BLADE CUTS THE AIR, THEN THE FISH... AND EVEN THE ROCK!
Pa!
splif
Pa!

?
NICE MOVES!
CHUAN ZHU!
MAY I HAVE YOUR NAME, MIGHTY WARRIOR?
I'M WU ZHI HSU
THIS FATED ENCOUNTER WITH WU ZHI HSU, WHAT EFFECT WILL IT HAVE ON CHUAN ZHU?


MY LORD, WU ZHI HSU'S FATHER DIED BY EMPEROR QIN'S HAND. HE URGES YOU TO SEEK REVENGE ON HIS BEHALF AND BELIEVES THAT IT IS BEST FOR JIANGSU. PLEASE MAKE YOUR DECISION!
WU ZHI HSU, LEAVE AND MAKE NO FURTHER DISTURBANCE.
WE CAN'T EVEN DISCUSS THINGS... PRINCE GUAN SHOULD HAVE A SECRET PLAN FOR REGICIDE!


WHEN PRINCE GUAN RECEIVED CHUAN ZHU, THEY TREATED EACH OTHER AS EQUALS, EVEN THOUGH THEIR STATUSES WERE QUITE DIFFERENT


HE SENT THE VIRTUOUS PRINCE JIN TO MONITER THE ORDER, HOWEVER HIS ROUTE BACK WAS CUT OFF BY JIANGSU MILITANTS, AND THE MILITARY HORSEMAN WERE UNABLE TO RETURN
BUREAUCRAT WU RULED FOR 9 YEARS AFTER THE EMPEROR DIED. ON THE SECOND YEAR, IN SPRING, BUREAUCRAT WU WANTED TO MAKE USE OF THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS COMING ON. HE SENT ONE OF HIS TWO YOUNGER BROTHERS, PRINCE SHU YUNG, TO LEAD THE ARMY AND LAY SIEGE TO JIANGSU
Note: This speaks of Bureaucrat Wu's assassination attempts on his younger brothers. He thirsts for power and fears that his brothers may one day claim the throne

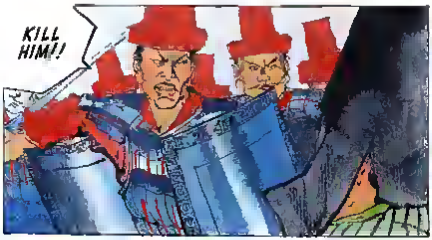
WE CAN'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNE MOMENT! IF WE DON'T SEIZE IT WHO KNOWS HOW LONG WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT!
THE NEWS TRAVELED TO WHERE PRINCE GUAN WAS...
AND THERE WASN'T A STATESMAN AMONG THEM EITHER. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE FORCE! NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP US!
BUREAUCRAT WU WAS ABLE TO KILL THE OLD AND THE YOUNG. HE SENT HIS ARMY TO STRIKE DOWN HIS OWN BROTHERS...
ON APRIL THE THIRD
GUAN'S LIFE IS YOUR LIFE!
PRINCE GUAN STATIONED A GROUP OF SOLDIERS IN THE CELLAR, PREPARED A BAMBOO MAT,* AND INVITED THE BUREAUCRAT OVER FOR DINNER

*Bamboo mats are often used for ceremonies and parties in China

A GROUP OF SOLDIERS THAT BUREAUCRAT WU EMPLOYED FROM THE PALACE FOLLOWED HIM TO PRINCE GUAN'S HOUSEHOLD
THE WINE HAS GONE THROUGH THREE PATROLS PRINCE GUAN SAID THAT HIS FOOT HURT, AND HAS EXCUSED HIMSELF.

BROTHER CHUAN, IS EVERYTHING READY?
I HAVE PREPARED A DELICIOUS YELLOW CROAKER FOR DINNER
YES!
BEFORE YOU HEAD TO THE DINING HALL, A BODY SEARCH MUST BE DONE.
HOWEVER
CHUAN ZHU WALKED STEP AFTER STEP TO THE DINING HALL, THINKING OF HOW TO KILL THE BUREAUCRAT
YES!
GO BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR TIMING

HM?
YA!
WAAH! THERE'S A KNIFE!
THE PLAN WAS TO KILL HIM IN ONE STRIKE SO THE TIMING HAD TO BE PRECISE WITHOUT KNOWING IT, CHUAN ZHU'S HEART WAS SET ABLAZE.

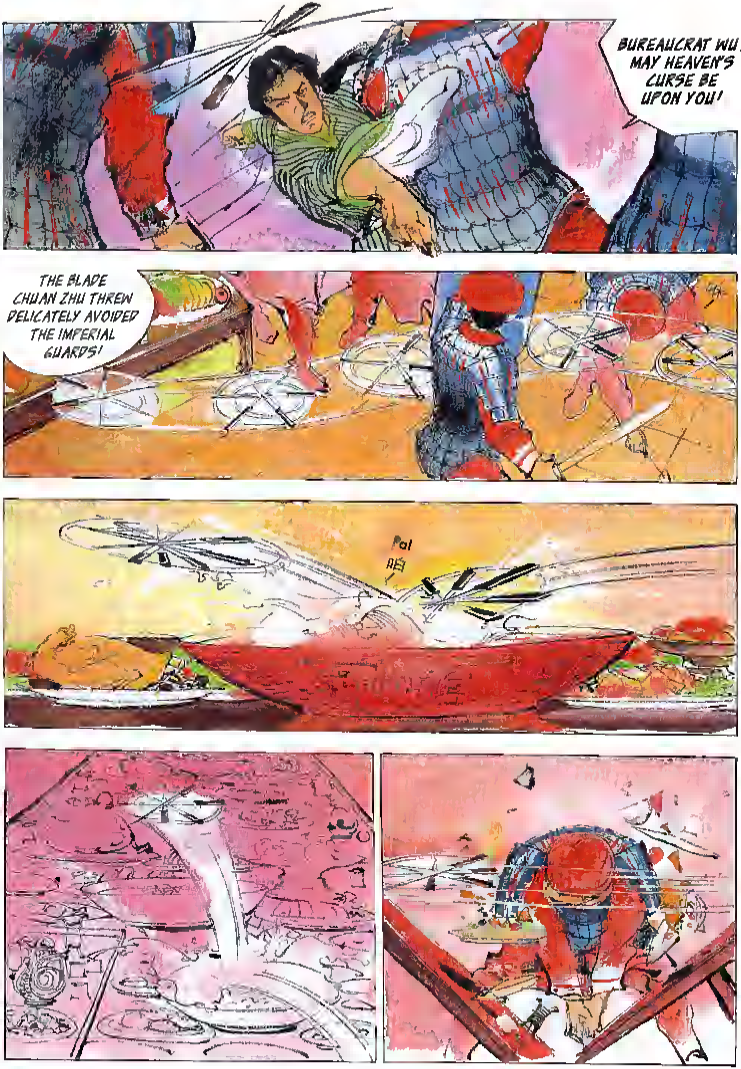

KILL HIM!!

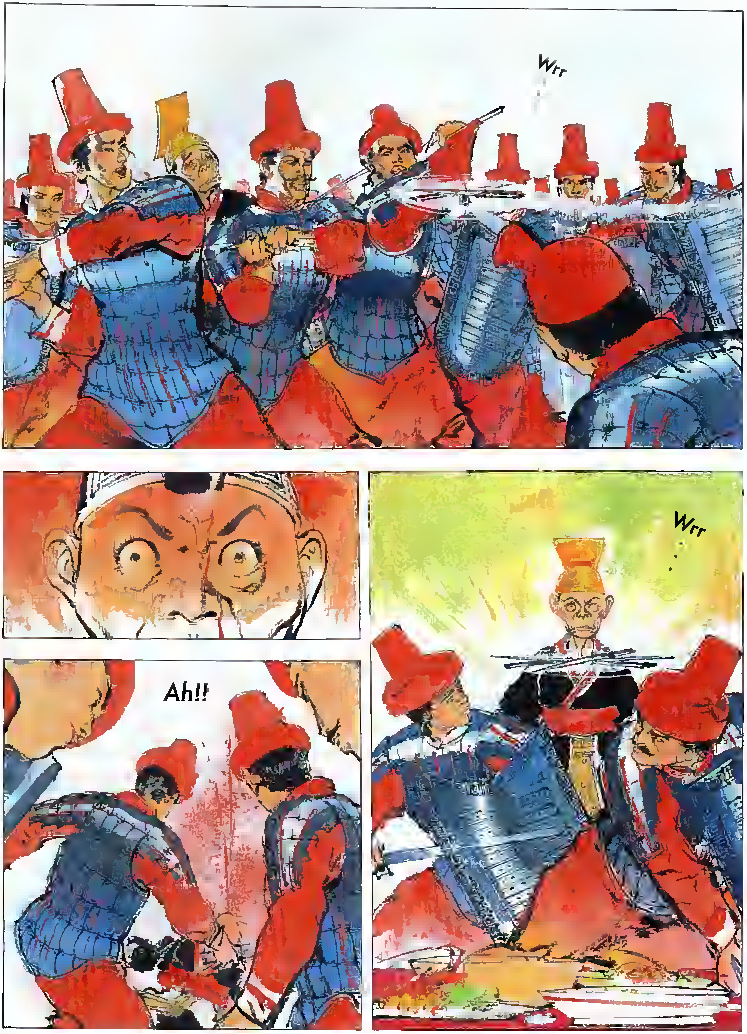
WU IT'S OVER

AM I TO LOSE MY LIFE HERE?
DAMN IT, MY ATTACKS SEEM USELESS TODAY

IF THERE'S WATER THEN I'LL HAVE A WAY
WATER?

GOT IT!


BUREAUCRAT WU, MAY HEAVEN'S CURSE BE UPON YOU!
THE BLADE CHUAN ZHU THREW DELICATELY AVOIDED THE IMPERIAL GUARDS!
Pat
BEI


Wrr
Ah!!
Wrr

CHUAN ZHU, WHO HAD LOST HIS BLADE, WAS AS VULNERABLE AS A TIGER THAT LOST ITS SHARP CLAWS. HE SUFFERED THE OVERWHELMING ATTACK OF THE IMPERIAL GUARDS' BLADES

AFTER BUREAUCRAT WU PASSED, THE IMPERIAL GUARDS WERE PANIC STRICKEN. PRINCE GUAN QUICKLY SUMMONED HIS SOLDIERS, AND THE GUARDS UNDER THE BUREAUCREAT WERE DISPATCHED.
ONCE THE POSITION WAS FILLED. PRINCE GUAN PROMOTED CHUAN ZHU'S SON TO A MINISTER
TO YEAR'S LATER IN THE JIN DYNASTY SHENG YU KANG STABBED ZHAO XIANG ZI.
WHEN PRINCE GUAN TOOK THE THRONE, HE BECAME KING HELU OF WU

Chuan Zhu

Chuan Zhu was a native of Wu. While Wu Zi Xu was fleeing from the state of Chu to Wu, he learned of Chuan Zhu's skills. Wu Zi Xu met the ruler of Wu, King Liao and tried to persuade him of the advantages of invading Chu. The Wu Prince Guan, said, "Wu Yuan speaks of attacking Chu because his father and elder brother were killed by Chu. He wishes to take revenge for selfish reasons and does not act in the best interest for Wu. Thus the Wu King ceased discussions on this matter.

Wu Zi Xu knew that Prince Guan was planning to kill King Liao so he said, "Guang harbours secret ambitions and therefore speaking of foreign matters will be futile." He then recommended Chuan Zhu to Prince Guan.

Prince Guan a father was the Wu King Zhu Fan. Zhu Fan had three younger brothers who were in descending order of seniority: Yu Ji, Yi Mei and Ji Zi Zha. Zhu Fan knew that Ji Zi Zha was worthy of the throne so he did not have children. He was intending to pass on the seat to his younger brothers, such that it would eventually fall into Ji Zi Zha's hands. When Zhu Fan died, kingship was passed on to Yu Ji. Yu Ji died and it was passed on to Yi Mei. However, when Yi Mei died and kingship was passed on to Ji Zi Zha, Ji Zi Zha fled, unwilling to assume kingship. So the people of Wu named Yi Mei's son as king. Prince Guan said, "If we had kept to the succession of brothers, Ji Zi would have been king. If the throne must be passed onto a son, then I, Guan, would have been the true successor and I should be king. He secretly maintained some scheming officials seeking to use them to seize the throne.

Once Guan had Chuan Zhu on his side, he treated him well and courteously. In King Liao's ninth year of reign, King Ping of Chu died. The next spring, King Liao took advantage of the mourning in Chu and sent his two younger brothers, Prince Gai Yu and Prince Zhu Yong, to lead the army and besiege the Chu city of Qian. He sent Yanling Ji Zi to Wu to watch for any movements among the feudal princes.

Soldiers dispatched by Chu blocked off the escape route for Gai Yu and Zhu Yong, so the Wu army could not return to Wu. Thus, Prince Guan called upon Chuan Zhu and said, "We cannot miss this opportune moment! If we don't strike now, how will we ever succeed? Further more, I, Guan, am the true heir and I should be king. Even if Ji Zi returns, he cannot denounce me."

Chuan Zhu said, "We can kill King Liao. His mother is old and his sons are weak, while his two younger brothers and the army are battling in Chu. Furthermore, Chu has cut off their route of retreat. Currently outside of Wu, there are troubles with Chu, and within there are but spineless officials. There will be no opposition against us."

The young master bowed his head and said, "I would be honoured to serve you."

It was the third day of the fourth month. On this day, Prince Guan had already stationed armoured soldiers in the basement while preparing a rich wine feast and inviting the Wu King, Liao, to drink with him. King Liao sent his soldiers to form ranks, and the line ran from inside the palace into Guan's home. On the left and right of the gate and stairs were King Liao's relatives. The attendants standing on either side of King Liao held long spears in their hands.
After they had drunk their fill, Prince Guan said he had aching feet. He then walked into the basement and had Chuan Zhu place a knife in the belly of a roasted fish and serve it. As he stood before the king, Chuan Zhu split open the fish and stabbed King Liao with the knife. King Liao died immediately. The attendants on the left and right killed Chuan Zhu, and the king's men were thrown into chaos. Prince Guan mobilized the armoured soldiers lying and waiting to attack. They wiped out King Liao's followers, and Prince Guan named himself King Helu. Helu thus conferred the rank of a high minister upon Chuan Zhu's son.

Some seventy odd years after this event, the Yu Rang incident occurred in Jin.

ASSASSIN STORY

CHAPTER 2

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ASSASSIN STORY 3

Yu Rang

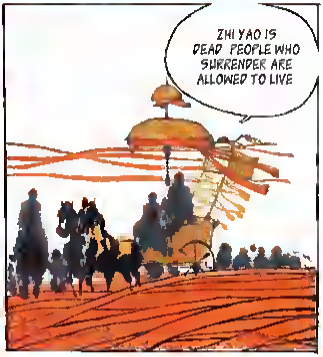
Thus he changed his name and pretended to be a slave suffering from a punishment and entered the palace of Zhao as a toilet cleaner. He kept a short sharp knife to assassinate Zhao for whenever he got the chance. When Zhao arrived at the toilet he became paranoid and ordered his soldiers to check on the slave.

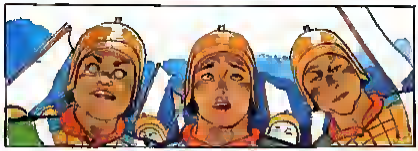
After a while Yu Rang painted himself to create disgusting pimples and boils on his body. He also swallowed ashes to make his voice sound different, so that people would not recognize him saying [Are you Yu Rang?]

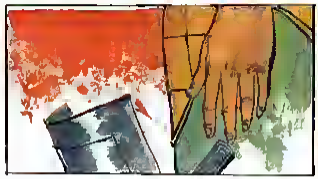
Chapter Three
Yu Rang

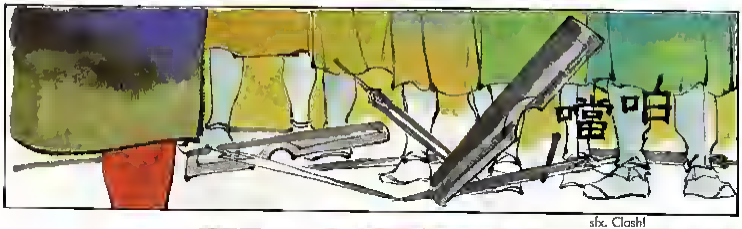
sfx: Ya!
呀
sfx: Ha!
哈!
sfx: Fuf Fuwah!
噗!

sfx: touch/bump








sfx. Clash!

VICTORY TO THE KING! HURRAY!!

HIP, HIP, HURRAY!!

sfx. Pat
咱!
sfx. si
sfx: ne gh
嘶!
sfx. de
DAMMIT! DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!!
的!

WAH!

HURRY, CHASE HIM!!

MY LORD, YOU CAN REALLY DRINK!

唏!

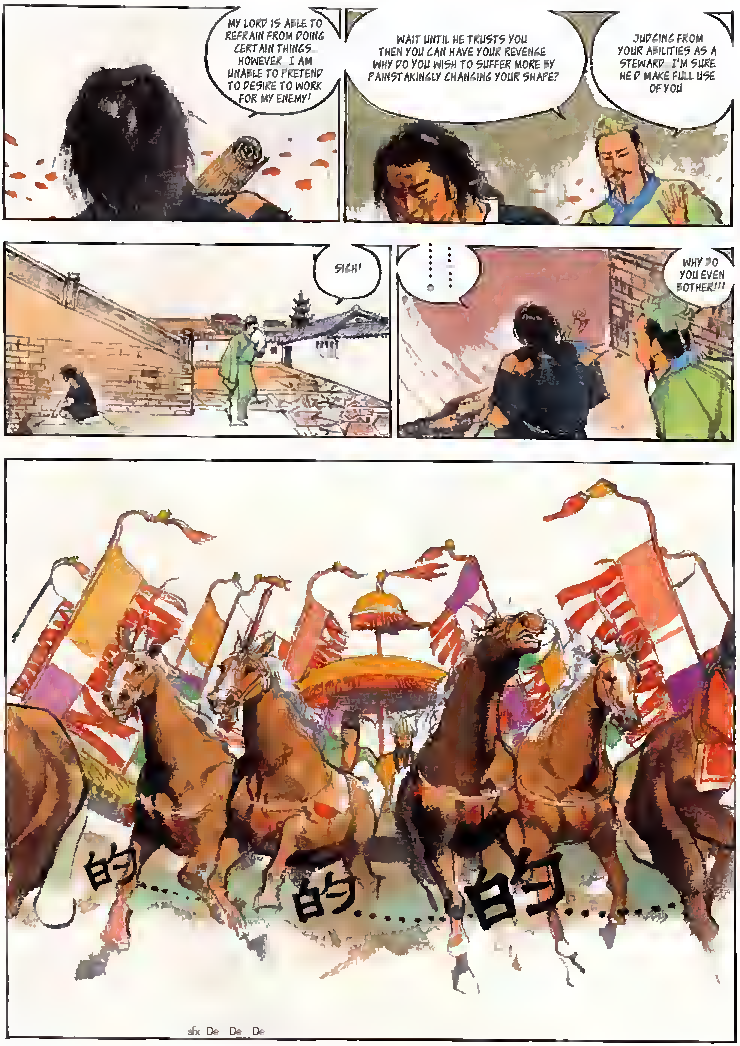
HAHAHA...
WHAT MY LORD SAID IS TOO MUCH!

ZHI YAO'S SKULL MAKES A GOOD CUP... THE WINE TASTES MORE UNIQUE!

?
RIGHT AWAY!
CAPTURE THIS MAN IMMEDIATELY!
HUH? AREN'T YOU ZHI YAO'S STEWARD, YU RANG?
MY LORD, WE FOUND A KNIFE ON HIM
IT'S EASY IF YOU'RE COURTING DEATH...
噹!
sfx. clang!
LET GO OF HIM!
STOP!
I'M UNFORTUNATE TODAY. I HAVE LOST MY ARMY, FOR THEY WERE KILLED AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.
THAT'S RIGHT. I, YU RANG, AM HERE TO SEEK REVENGE FOR ZHI YAO

MY LORD! YOU'RE DRUNK! HE TRIED TO KILL YOU!
YES!
HM!
GO!
MM...
sfx: pa!

ARE YOU YU XIANG?
啊啊!
ahh. oh!
AND EVEN PAINTED MY BODY TO CREATE PIMPLE LIKE MARKS I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME!
TO GET MY REVENGE FOR ZHI YAO I SWALLOWED ASHES TO CHANGE MY VOICE


MY LORD IS ABLE TO REFRAIN FROM DOING CERTAIN THINGS. HOWEVER, I AM UNABLE TO PRETEND TO DESIRE TO WORK FOR MY ENEMY!
WAIT UNTIL HE TRUSTS YOU THEN YOU CAN HAVE YOUR REVENGE. WHY DO YOU WISH TO SUFFER MORE BY PAINSTAKINGLY CHANGING YOUR SHAPE?
JUDGING FROM YOUR ABILITIES AS A STEWARD... I'M SURE HE'D MAKE FULL USE OF YOU
SIGH!
WHY DO YOU EVEN BOTHER!!!
的.....的.....白的.....
sfx De De De

的.....
AH!
sfx. de..
STOP!
sfx. de..
的.....

sfx: wahl
sfx: touch/fall
SIGH!

ZHI YAO HAD THEM KILLED AND INSTEAD OF AVENGING THEM, YOU BECAME HIS STEWARD...
YU KANG, AIN'T YOU SERVE THE HAN CLAN AND THE WEI CLAN INITIALLY?
SO I REPAID THEM AS A COMMON SERVANT
THE HAN CLAN AND THE WEI CLAN TREATED ME AS A COMMON SERVANT...
WHY DO YOU WISH TO AVENGE HIM?
NOW THAT ZHI YAO IS DEAD
I HAD SHOWN YOU FORGIVENESS BUT NOW IT'S BEST FOR YOU TO FIGURE YOUR OWN WAY OUT
YU KANG! YOU HAVE GAINED FAME THROUGH ZHI YAO'S MATTER
ZHI YAO TREATED ME LIKE A BROTHER SO I MUST REPAY HIM LIKE A BROTHER

RELEASE!
AFTER TODAY'S EVENTS, I SHALL BE EXECUTED. HOWEVER I WANT TO SHOW MY WISH FOR REVENGE TO ZHI YAO. OR ELSE I WOULD HAVE DIED IN VAIN
YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN MERCIFUL TO ME EARLIER. THERE'S NOT A SINGLE PERSON WHO DOESN'T PRAISE YOUR VIRTUES
sfx_pant

Translator's Note: To pierce Zhao Wu Xu's cont with a sword would enable him to keep the promise he made to Zhi Yao

she pa!
---- 40 YEARS AFTER MARKED THE BEGINNING OF NEI ZHENG'S STORY ----
YU KANG COMMITTED SUICIDE THAT DAY. NEWS OF HIS STORY TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE NATION AND PEOPLE WHO HEARD HIS STORY WEPT FOR HIM
According to one legend, Zhao Wu Xu's coat started oozing blood after being stabbed by Yu Rang's sword. After Zhao Wu Xu returned to his carriage, the wheels had hardly turned one round when he suddenly dropped dead. This rather colourful legend was mentioned in the Shi Ji Suo Yin section of the 1963 Beijing edition of the Shiji. If Si ma Qian had known of this legend, he chose to omit it in his Shi Ji

Yu Rang was a citizen of the Jin Kingdom. Though he had served under Lord Fan and Lord Zhongxing, he remained nameless. He left them to serve under Count Zhi, who enjoyed many well-people, and hatred of him. When Count Zhi launched an invasion against Viscount Zhaoxiang, Zhaoxiang allied with Han and Wei to destroy Count Zhi. After defeating Count Zhi, they divided his lands between them.

Viscount Zhaoxiang hated Count Zhi with a vengeance, and so he had Count Zhi's skull lacquered as a drinking vessel. Yu Rang fled to the mountains sighing, "Abhi Men die for their friends, women apply make up for their admirers.* Just as Count Zhi was acquainted with me, I must exact his revenge as recompense lest shame tarnish my soul." Adopting the name of a convict, he gained entry into the palace as a toilet facet, carrying a dagger in hopes of assassinating Viscount Xiang. When Viscount Xiang entered the toilet, his heart started pounding from fear, so he had the convicts repairing the toilets held for questioning. When it was discovered he was hiding a dagger, Yu Rang exclaimed, "I want revenge for Count Zhi!" The guards wished to kill him, but Viscount Xiang said, "He is a man of honour, so all I need to do is take care in avoiding him. There is no successor after Count Zhi, yet this man still seeks revenge; he truly is a great man." So in the end, they released him.

[* The phrase means people will do things for the sake of those who are worthy of it.]

Not long after, Yu Rang painted himself with lacquer to make his skin fester, and for swallowed charcoal to make his voice hoarse and disfigured himself to make himself unidentifiable, and started begging on the streets. Even his wife did not know him. When he encountered a friend, he recognised him and asked, "Are you not Yu Rang? He replied, "I am not." His friend wept for him and said, "Given your abilities, you can become a servant to work under Viscount Xiang. He will definitely take to you. Once you gain his trust, would it not be easy to fulfil you wish? Why go to such pains to wreck your body and ruin your features? Is it not more difficult to take revenge on Viscount Xiang this way?! Yu Rang replied, "If I chose to serve someone and then sought to kill him, it would be serving a master with ulterior motives. I know that doing things in this manner is incredibly difficult, but I choose to do this so that all later generations who serve their masters with ulterior motives will feel shame."

With that, Yu Rang left. Shortly after, Viscount Xiang left his palace, and Yu Rang concealed himself under a bridge he would cross over. When Viscount Xiang reached the bridge, his horse panicked, so he remarked, "It must be Yu Rang." He sent his men to investigate, and it was indeed Yu Rang. And so Viscount Xiang admonished Yu Rang, "Did not you once serve Lord Fan and Lord Zhongxing? When Count Zhi annihilated them, not only did you not seek vengeance, you went to serve under Count Zhi. Count Zhi is dead, so why are you so intent on taking revenge for this man in particular?"

Yu Rang replied, "When serving Lord Fan and Lord Zhongxing, they treated me like an ordinary commoner, and so I repaid them in an ordinary manner. When serving Count Zhi, he treated me like an exceptional person, and so I shall repay him in an exceptional manner." Viscount Zhi heaved a sigh and said, tears streaming, "Ah, noble Yu! You have become rather well known for your exploits on behalf of Count Zhi, while I have given my full of pardons. You should think for yourself. I will not let you go free anymore!" He ordered his soldiers to surround him. Yu Rang said, "I have heard that your honour* does not bury others' good names, and this loyal servant believes in dying with a good name. You once pardoned me, so not a single person doubts your clemency. I have already resigned myself to the death sentence for today's incident. If you would kindly allow me your clothing so I may strike at it. This will sate my desire for vengeance and I shall be able to pass on with no regrets. I daren't hope that you agree to my request, but I will still speak my mind!" And so in great admiration of his chivalry, Viscount Xiang ordered his men to take his clothing to Yu Rang. Yu Rang drew his sword and leapt and thrust at it in a flourish of attacks, then proclaimed, "Now I can repay my debt to Count Zhi!" Then he committed suicide with his sword. When the great men of Zhao learned of the news, they wept for him.

A little over forty years later, there was the Nie Zhi incident in Zhi City/Country.

* (a- wise lord. Would use 'wise sir' except 'sir' doesn't sound right in a Chinese setting.)
** use of nameless and good name (rather than, say, reputation) because the concept of names was very important in Ancient China.

Yu Rang

ASSASSIN STORY

CHAPTER 3

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As of 0 / 9 0-9
we are still looking to
cleaners, typesetters, e
ed ters and quality
che k s

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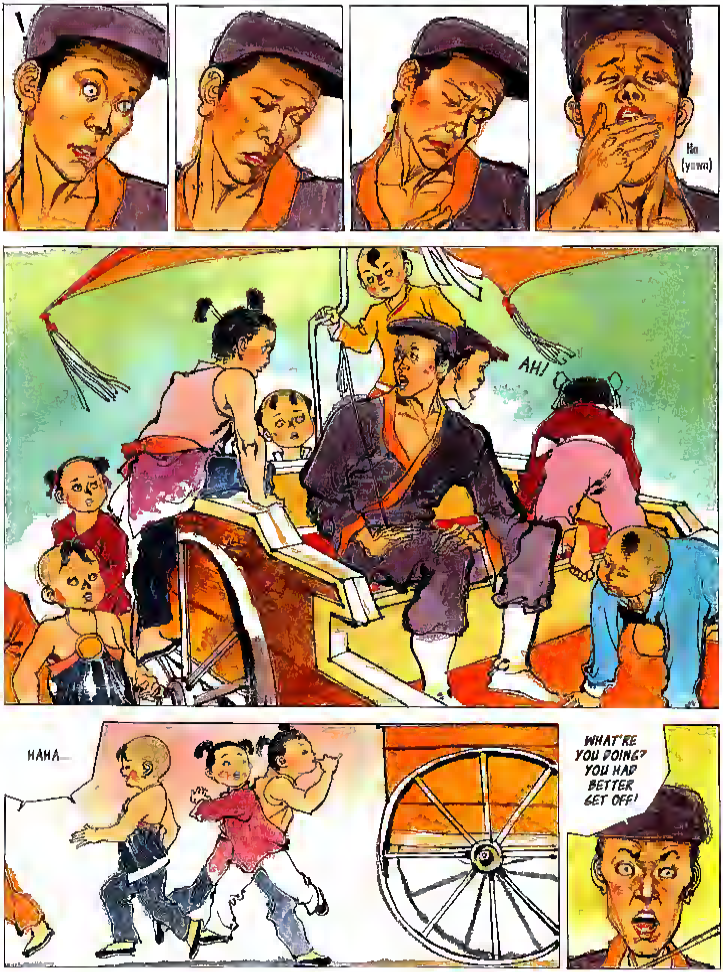
ASSASSIN STORY 4

Nie Zheng

And so he travelled west to Pu Yang to meet Yan Zhong Zi [illegible] I said, "The reason why I didn't reply to Zhong Zi in the past is purely because my Mother is still alive. Unfortunately, my Mother has already passed away from old age, so please let me deal with whoever Zhong Zi wishes to exact his revenge upon."

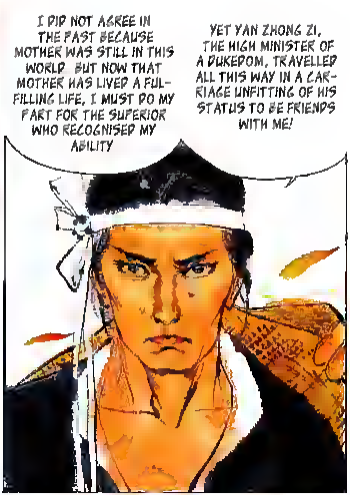
Thus, Nie Zheng said his farewells and travelled alone, and he arrived in Han country with his precious sword in hand. The Han Prime Minister, Han Lei, happened to be seated in his home, wielding a weapon, and there were many people on guard. Nie Zheng charged straight in and climbed the stands, whereupon he assassinated Han Lei. The people around became extremely panicked, and Nie Zheng gave a roar of anger, slaughtering over a dozen people. Then, he sliced off the skin of his face, dug out his eyes and pulled out his own guts...

Nie Zheng

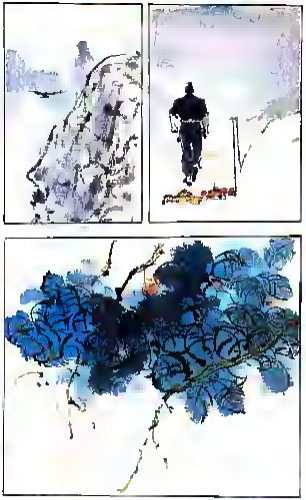

Ha (yawn)
AH!
HAHA...
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? YOU HAD BETTER GET OFF!

HONESTLY, MASTER TOO... COMING TO THIS DOG-BUTCHERER, NIE ZHENG'S HOUSE
AND HE EVEN WANTS TO GIVE HIM GOLD!
YOU'LL REGRET IT IF I CATCH YOU NEXT TIME!
THERE'S NO NEED TO BE GRATEFUL TO SOMEONE WHO JUST KILLS DOGS!
IT'S JUST SO ABNORMAL!
I ONLY ASK TO BE FRIENDS WITH YOU. THEN I'LL BE SATISFIED...
THIS HUNDRED YI GOLD OF MINE IS MERELY INTENDED TO COVER THE FEES FOR YOUR MOTHER'S HUMBLE FAKE.
BROTHER NIE, I HAVE TRAVELLED ACROSS VARIOUS COUNTRIES FOR MANY YEARS SEEKING REVENGE
ON THIS VISIT TO GUI COUNTRY, I HEARD THAT YOU, MY FRIEND, ARE THE MOST LOYAL WARRIOR SO I'M GIFTING YOU A HUNDRED YI OF GOLD
1/16 yi. ancient measuring unit 20 yi = 1 kg

WHILE MY MOTHER IS IN THIS WORLD I DARE NOT RISK MY LIFE TO ANSWER ANOTHER'S NEEDS
ZHONG ZI THE MONEY I'M EARNING NOW IS ENOUGH TO FEED MY MOTHER AND I REALLY CANNOT ACCEPT YOUR GIFT AGAIN
HMPH!
THERE IS NO NEED AND PLEASE TAKE BACK THE GOLD
IF THAT'S THE CASE THEN I'LL COME AGAIN ANOTHER DAY
THE CYCLES OF THE SUN AND MOON MARKED THE PASSAGE OF TIME, AND NIE ZHENG'S MOTHER PASSED AWAY FROM OLD AGE...
I... NIE ZHENG, AM BUT A HUMBLE TOWNS-FOLK SPENDING MY DAYS HONING KNIVES AND BUTCHERING DOGS
MOTHER!


I DID NOT AGREE IN THE PAST BECAUSE MOTHER WAS STILL IN THIS WORLD. BUT NOW THAT MOTHER HAS LIVED A FULFILLING LIFE, I MUST DO MY PART FOR THE SUPERIOR WHO RECOGNISED MY ABILITY
YET YAN ZHONG ZI, THE HIGH MINISTER OF A DUKEDOM, TRAVELLED ALL THIS WAY IN A CARRIAGE UNFITTING OF HIS STATUS TO BE FRIENDS WITH ME!

WHAT? YOUR MOTHER HAS RISEN TO HEAVEN?
THE REASON I DID NOT AGREE WITH ZHONG ZI'S REQUEST WAS ONLY BECAUSE MY MOTHER WAS IN THIS WORLD. BUT NOW SHE HAS PASSED AWAY. LET ME DEAL WITH THE PERSON ZHONG ZI WISHES TO EXACT REVENGE UPON!

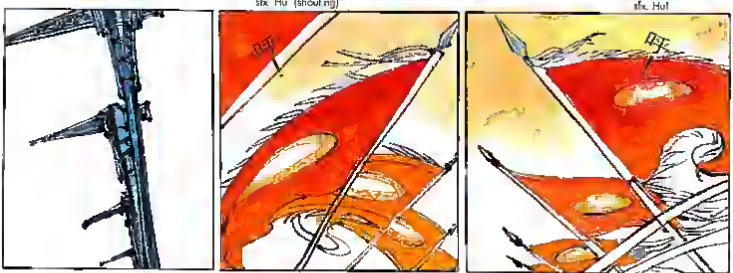


MY ENEMY IS THE HAN PRIME MINISTER HAN LEI, THE HAN KING'S UNCLE. HE HAS MANY SERVANTS,
AND THERE IS EXTREMELY TIGHT SECURITY AROUND HIS HOME I'VE WANTED TO SEND SOMEONE TO ASSASSINATE HIM BUT I NEVER SUCCEEDED!
AI!

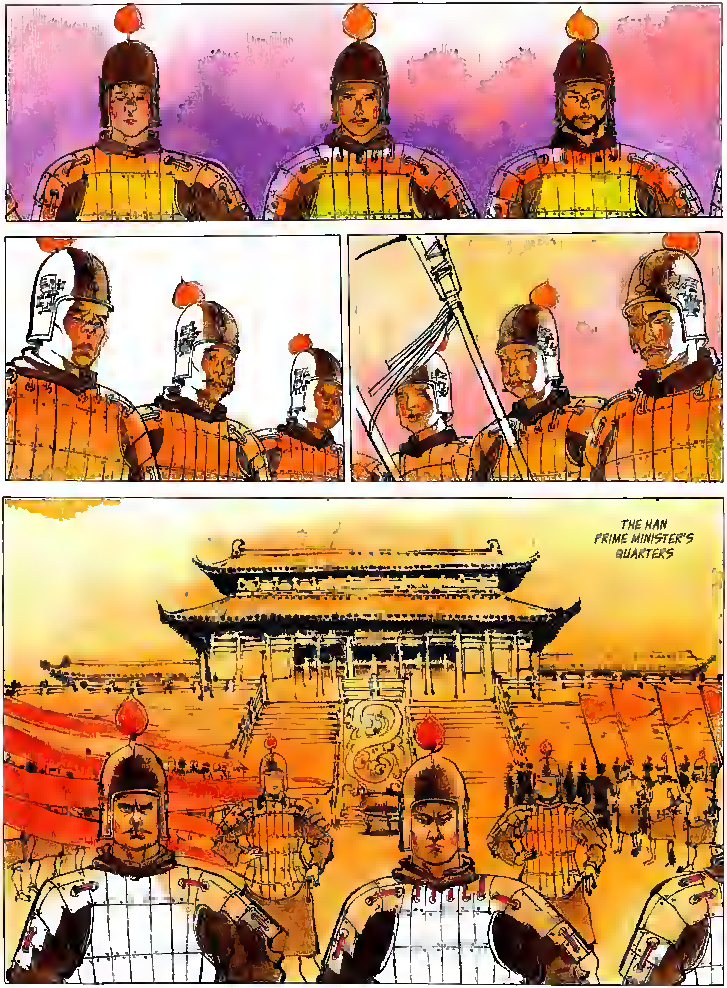
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.. I'M AFRAID WE CANNOT SEND MORE TROOPS BUT IT IS PERMISSIBLE FOR ME TO GO ALONE
HAN COUNTRY AND WEI COUNTRY ARE NOT THAT DISTANT FROM EACH OTHER YOU WISH TO KILL THE PRIME MINISTER OF ANOTHER COUNTRY AND THIS PERSON IS ALSO THE KING'S RELATIVE..
IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO ABANDON THIS MISSION I WOULD LIKE TO SEND MORE TROOPS...

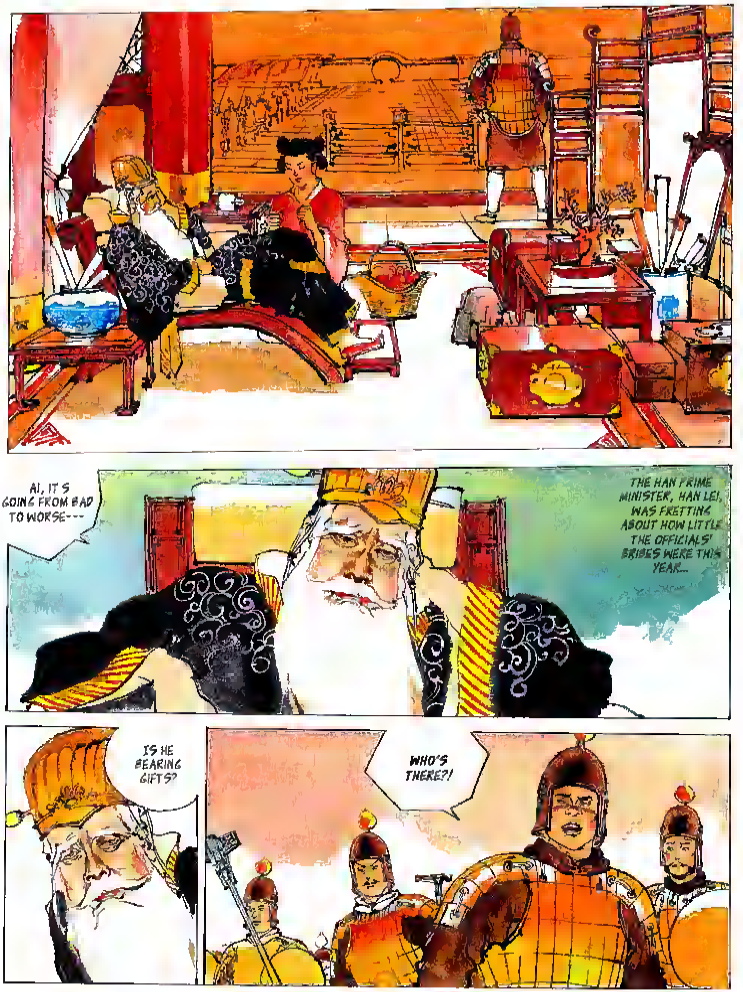
sfx: Hu (shouting)

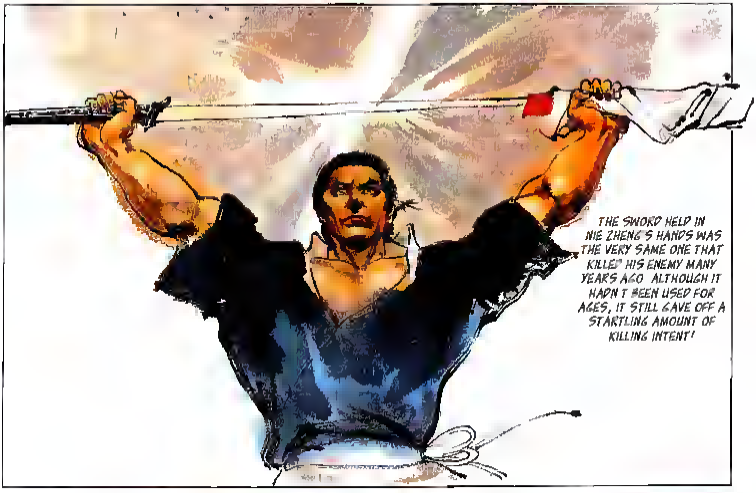
sfx: Hu!



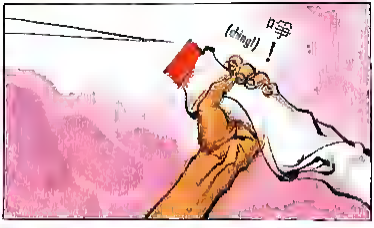
T/N. usually this is the sound of warriors shouts, whenever they are parading or practicing martial arts. Can't think of a good English equivalent.


THE HAN
PRIME MINISTER'S
QUARTERS

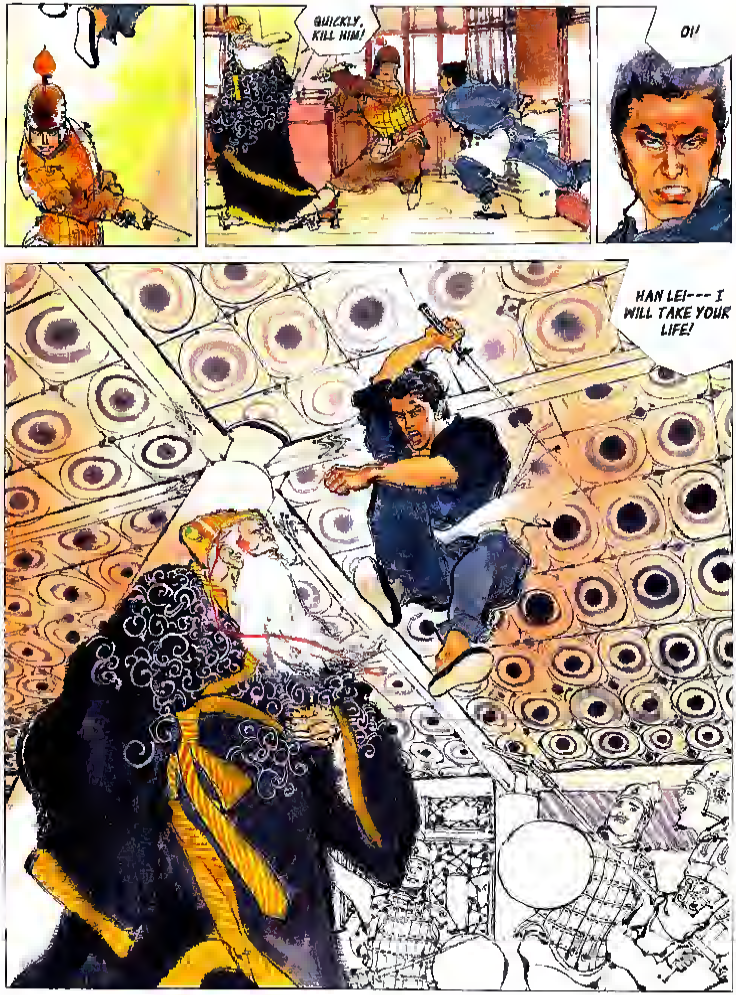

AI, IT'S GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE---
THE HAN PRIME MINISTER, HAN LEI, WAS FRETTING ABOUT HOW LITTLE THE OFFICIALS' BRIBES WERE THIS YEAR...
IS HE BEARING GIFTS?
WHO'S THERE?!


THE SWORD HELD IN NIE ZHENG'S HANDS WAS THE VERY SAME ONE THAT KILLED HIS ENEMY MANY YEARS AGO. ALTHOUGH IT HADN'T BEEN USED FOR AGES, IT STILL GAVE OFF A STARTLING AMOUNT OF KILLING INTENT!

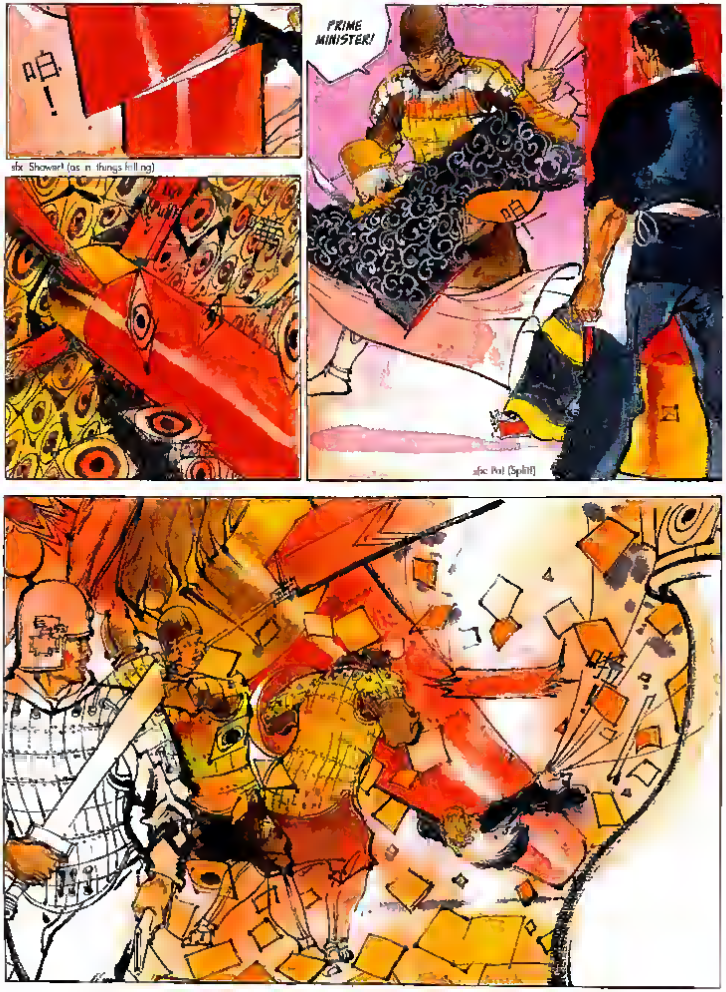
Dre--


(shing!)

EVEN IF NIE ZHENG WAS UNAWARE OF THIS HE HAD DECIDED THAT HE WOULD DIE LONG AGO---
THROWING ONE'S SCABBARD IN BATTLE WAS AN ILL OMEN THAT ONE WOULD NOT RETURN ALIVE---
Yo!吗!


QUICKLY, KILL HIM!
OI!
HAN LEI--- I WILL TAKE YOUR LIFE!

sfx: jjl (slice)
HYA!
WA!

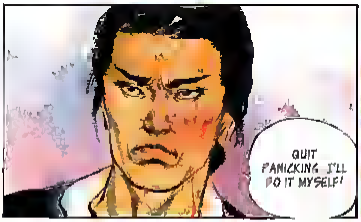

!
sfx: Shower (as n things hit ng)
PRIME MINISTER!
sfx: Pat (Split!)

sfx flutter!
sfx Bebpeent
AH
AH

THE ASSASSIN'S HERE!
KILL HIM!
WAH!
HYA!

WAH!
UH!
UGH!
HYA!
YA!
WA!

AFTER KILLING HAN LEI, NIE ZHENG CUT DOWN ANOTHER TEN-ODD GUARDS IN ONE GO
!


QUIT PANICKING. I'LL DO IT MYSELF!

?

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!
QUICK, KILL HIM!

OOH!
UGH!
AH!
NIE ZHENG SLICED OFF HIS OWN FACE, DUG OUT HIS EYES AND PULLED OUT HIS INNARDS. HE DIED A TERRIBLY CRUEL DEATH, A TERRIBLY HEROIC DEATH!

AYE, IT MIGHT EVEN BE SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY----
REALLY?! IF I KNEW THEN I'D EARN MYSELF QUITE SOME ILL-GOTTEN GAINS
I HEARD SOMEONE ASSASSINATED THE HAN PRIME MINISTER AND THAT THE MURDERER COMMITTED SUICIDE. HIS FEATURES HAVE BEEN RUINED, AND THE HAN PEOPLE DON'T KNOW HIS NAME EITHER. SO THEY'RE OFFERING A THOUSAND GOLD FOR SOMEONE TO IDENTIFY THE CORPSE!
HAHA...
SO YOU WANT TO DIE?!
DON'T RUN!

COULD IT BE...?
RONA, WHERE ARE YOU GOING, DUMPING YOUR CLOTHES ASIDE?

BROTHER!
THIS PERSON KILLED OUR PRIME MINISTER AND THE KING IS OFFERING A THOUSAND GOLD FOR HIS SURNAME. HAVE YOU NOT HEARD, MA AM? WHY DARE TO SHOW THAT YOU'RE ACQUAINTED WITH HIM?!
OH HEAVEN!
SOB
MA AM?
MY YOUNGER BROTHER, NIE ZHENG, HID AND RESIGNED HIMSELF TO THE LIFE OF A HANKER BECAUSE MY MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE AND I WAS NOT YET MARRIED. IT IS ONLY NOW THAT MOTHER HAS PASSED AWAY AND I HAVE MARRIED THAT BROTHER WOULD REPAY ZHONG ZI'S RECOGNITION OF HIS ABILITIES. BROTHER DESTROYED HIS OWN BODY BECAUSE I'M STILL ALIVE, AND HE ELIMINATED ALL EVIDENCE SO AS TO PROTECT ME. SO HOW CAN I FEAR DEATH AND LET MY BROTHER'S NAME DISAPPEAR INTO OBSCURITY?

?
MA'AM?
SOB
AI~~~ SHE DIED FROM GRIEF
ANOTHER 320-ODD YEARS AFTER NIE ZHENG'S DEATH, JING KE'S ASSASSINATION OF THE QIN EMPEROR OCCURRED.
WHEN THE PEOPLE OF JIN, CHU, QI AND WEI LEARNED OF THIS INCIDENT, THEY ALL PRAISED NOT ONLY NIE ZHENG FOR BEING A BRAVE WARRIOR, BUT ALSO NIE RONG FOR BEING A WOMAN OF GREAT INTEGRITY! IF NIE ZHENG HAD KNOWN THAT HIS SISTER WOULD COME ALL THE WAY TO IDENTIFY HIS SURNAME, AND THAT BOTH BROTHER AND SISTER WOULD DIE IN THE HAN CAPITAL, HE MAY VERY WELL HAVE NOT DARED TO BET HIS LIFE TO EXACT YAN ZHONG ZI'S REVENGE. THIS WILL BE RECOUNTED IN THE NEXT SECTION.

Nie Zheng was a native of Zhi Shen ling Li. Having committed murder, he, seeking to avoid revenge, escaped to Chi country with his mother and older sister, and, living as a butcher, for a living.

A long time later, Yan Zhong Zi of Puyang, who served under Han Ai Hou, was chosen had fought with the Han Prime Minister Yi Kui. Yan Zhong Zi feared that Yi Kui would be put down and would return to the country. He traveled extensively seeking assistance to take revenge on Han Lei. In Qi country for a year, the people there speak of Nie Zheng the brave warrior who was hiding out in order to avoid vengeance. Yan Zhong Zi made a call at his place, ordering many times, also personally offering up Wine to Nie Zheng's mother. When he had drunk his fill of wine, Yan Zhong Zi took out a gift of one yi of gold to celebrate Nie Zheng mother's birthday. Nie Zheng was surprised by this generosity. And while he thanked Zhong Zi he deeply refused the gift. Zhong Zi tried to force him or attempt it, but Nie Zheng thanked him once more, saying, "I am fortunate to have my mother. My family is poor, and I move travel to foreign lands, but with just a few days work, I can buy savory foods for my mother. I have enough to provide for my mother, and I do not accept Zhong Zi's gift." Yan Zhong Zi made a respectful return the gift and became of Nie Zheng's words, said, "I seek revenge and this I have visited many dukedoms and kingdoms. Then in Qi I overheard that you were a righteous man. Thus I offer up small that you may pay for your humble face so as to strike up a relationship with you. I would not dare hope for anything more!" Nie Zheng said, "I have humbled myself as a butcher in the market place and my only wish is to care for my mother. My mother is in this world, and so I dare not lend this body of mine to others." Yan Zhong Zi was persistent, but Nie Zheng steadfastly refused. Then having entertained his host hospitality, Zhong Zi left.

After the time, one would only do this if someone who was of a higher rank than oneself. However, Nie Zheng's mother is only in middle of a butcher, while he is to court officials which reflects the extreme respect he is showing.

Long after, Nie Zheng mother died. Once the was buried and he had observed the full period of mourning, departing clothes, Nie Zheng said, "Sigh! Zhuan is simple swordsmith, and I raise my knife only to hurt the others as Yan Zhong Zi is minister of Prime. Despite the distance he traveled by carriage to meet me. I treated him extremely heartlessly. I have no great deed to my name. yet Yan Zhong Zi offered me a hundred gold for my mother's birthday. Although I did not accept, but I do not lend this body of mine to others. Yan Zhong Zi was the greatest. A wise and virtuous man has come to personally visit a poor secluded man like me, so how can I pass sit back with my hands on it? Earlier he had wined and dined me, even, but I refused because I had to care for my mother. Now that my mother had lived out her life I shall give my all to be who a knowledge's my worth. And as he heard of were to Puyang, and said upon meeting Yan Zhong Zi. In the past I did not acknowledge you as my mother was still alive. Unfortunately my mother in her old age has now as ended to heaven. Who do you seek revenge against? Please allow me to do this!"

Yan Zhong Zi told him frankly. My foe is the Han Prime Minister Han Lei. He is the ruler of the Han empire. Of as many clans under Han and his living quarters in the glory guarded. Thus, none has I hunger to an attempt all my numbers have born no fruit. The same lucky hunter you do not abandon the mission. Then please make me many troops, men and equipment so as to you in your wish. Nie Zheng said, Han and We are no all the different from each other. Since I will be killing by the prime minister who is also in current of the King, we cannot bring many people along. It is easy to make mistakes in many people and if any information gets out the entire Han nation will become you for. In the face of skyl. And so planning he troops, men and equipment with bankl Nie Zheng

He traveled to Han with his sword. The Han Prime Minister Han Lei just happened to be in a meeting in hall, and those were numerous nobles and bellied attending guard. Nie Zheng charged straight in climbing up the steps and stabbing Han Lei to death. The full description was: Nie Zheng gave a loud roar killing dozens of guards and those died from running his own feet digging out his own eyes and disembowelling himself.

The Han country had Nie Zheng's corpse displayed in the town and offered money where only one person but no one knew who he was. And so the Han country put out a reward of a thousand gold to be who could identify Han Lei's killer. For a long time, not a single person knew.

Zheng's eldest sister, Rong, heard that some one had killed the Han Prime Minister. The killer's name were unknown not a single person in the country knew who he was and had not only was his corpse put on display but a thousand gold was offered as reward money. She said tentatively, "Is it possible my younger brother?" and he? Ooh. Yan Zhong Zi really understands my brother! She immediately set off and went to Han and saw the capital to find that the dead man was indeed Nie Zheng. She clasped the corpse and wept in exceeding anguish and mourning. This is Nie Zheng of Zhi Shen ling. The people on the streets all asked. This person brutally murdered our country's Prime Minister and the King ban offered a reward of a thousand gold for his name. Have you not heard his name? Why do you dare to identify him?"

Rong replied, I have heard of him. There was why Zheng ended the hate that on the becoming a town vendor was because My brother was well and alive, and I was not single. Since My brother has lived in debt of his friend I have recently passed, what else could give back to me when Yan Zhong Zi picked him out of the lowly vendor's market place to strike a friendship and showed him such great kindness? War torn are my mind of gratitude. I lives up for those who recognize their worth, yet because I am still in this world he cannot lay down his arms so of the world not become good. How can I be altered of being killed. I find it my intention not to my into obscurity!" Tells greatly that he died all the Han people. After giving thanking men to heaven. Rong primed away from sorrow by Zi engin Side.

The people of Pu Chu Qi and Wei heard of this and said. It is not only Zheng who is skillful, his sister is also a strong woman. If Zheng had known of his older sister's matchless ethnic, she could not bear letting his body exposed to the streets, but she would risk committing dirty minded in all thousands of to name. Pun and their both sister and brother would die in the city of Han. he might not have died to pledge himself to Yan Zhong Zi. Yan Zhong Zi has won only nine to was over stabbing grief, and he more of his skill in treating people!

Nie Zheng

ASSASSIN STORY

CHAPTER 4

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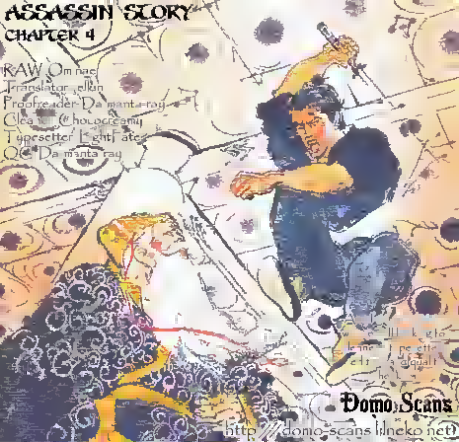

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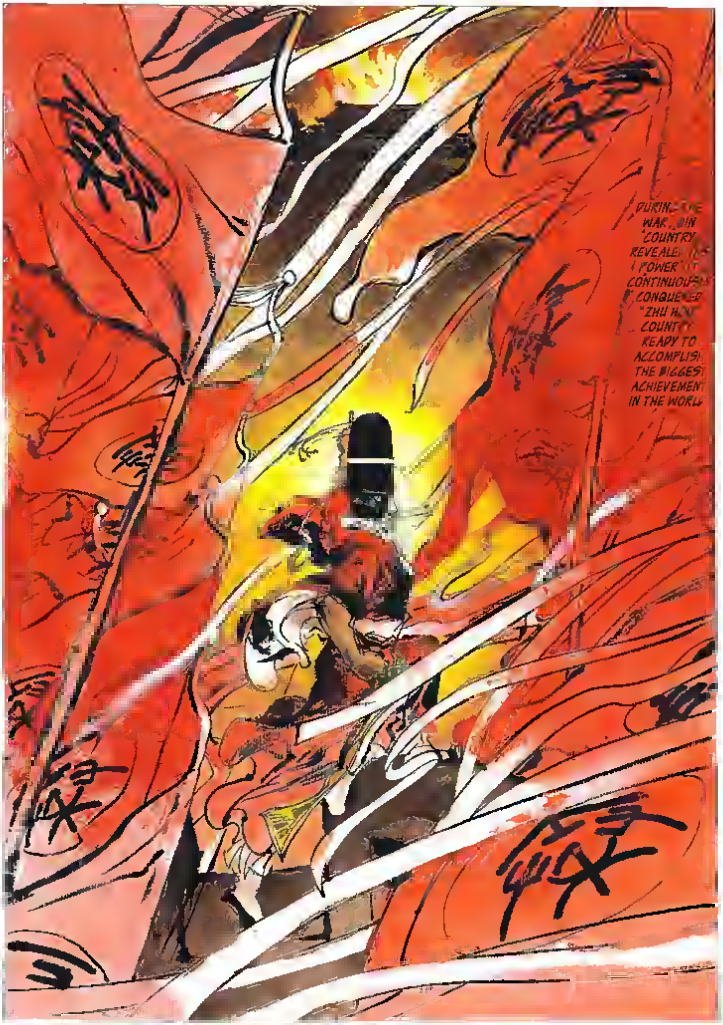
ASSASSIN STORY 5

Jing Ke

The prince and the guests who knew about what had happened wore shirts and hats in white to send Jing Ke off on his journey. As they arrived at the bank of the Yi River, they settled for a farewell feast just before Jing Ke began his journey to Qin country. As Gao Jian Li tapped on his zhu, Jing Ke sang a song with such sad tone to the melody of the zhu, leaving the prince and the guests in tears. Jing Ke stepped up once more to sing, ' The sound of the blowing wind, the coldness of the water from Yi River. Once the brave soldier sets off, there shall be no returning home!'...

Jing Ke was holding a box containing Fan Yu Qi's head, while Qin Wu Yang held another box with a map in it. Both of them, one to the front and another at the back, stepped into Qin's castle standing in order of rank. When they arrived at the steps of the pedestal, Qin Wu Yang's appearance became pale as he was afraid which the assembled ministers found puzzling. Jing Ke turned his head abruptly towards Qin Wu Yang, flashing the latter a smile before turning back forward to say, 'He's a rustic from an ethnic minority along the northern border and has never seen the Emperor before, so he's very frightened. Please grant him a little forgiveness, so he may complete his duty as an envoy before Your Majesty.' The king ordered Jing Ke, ' Get me the map which Qin Wu Yang is holding.' Grabbing the map, Jing Ke presented it to the king. The king opened the map to take a look at it, and when the map was completely revealed, a dagger appeared...

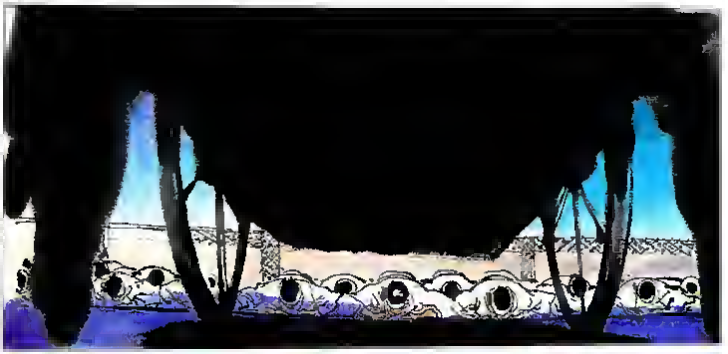
The Fifth
Assassin Story
Jing Ke


DURING THE WAR, QIN "COUNTRY" REVEALED ITS "POWER" IT CONTINUOUSLY CONQUERED "ZHU HOU" COUNTRY READY TO ACCOMPLISH THE BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT IN THE WORLD

WHEN PRINCE DAN FROM YAN COUNTRY SAW THAT WAR WAS APPROACHING, HE SENT JING KE AND QIN WU YANG TO QIN COUNTRY TO ASSASSINATE THE QIN EMPEROR

Below: The blowing of the wind!!

As this brave soldier sets off...
壯士一去兮
The coldness of the wate from Y. Rive
水
"Sobs"
There shall be no return ng home!!
JING KE!
Ha!
BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR PLANS..



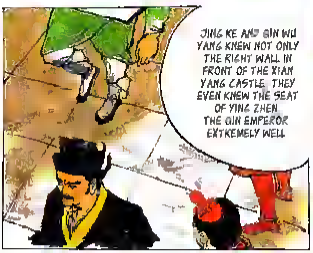
HIS FIERCENESS AND CRUELTY IS WELL-KNOWN IN YAN COUNTRY
QIN WU YANG THE VICE ENVOY 13 YEARS OLD HE BECAME A MURDERER WHEN HE WAS 13

T/N Both Jing Ke and Ge Nie were renowned swordsmen at the time. The story is touched on in the poem, but basically Jing Ke was ruthless make a their initial meeting and left out of embarrassment Ge Nie than snubbed him for being with no special at all

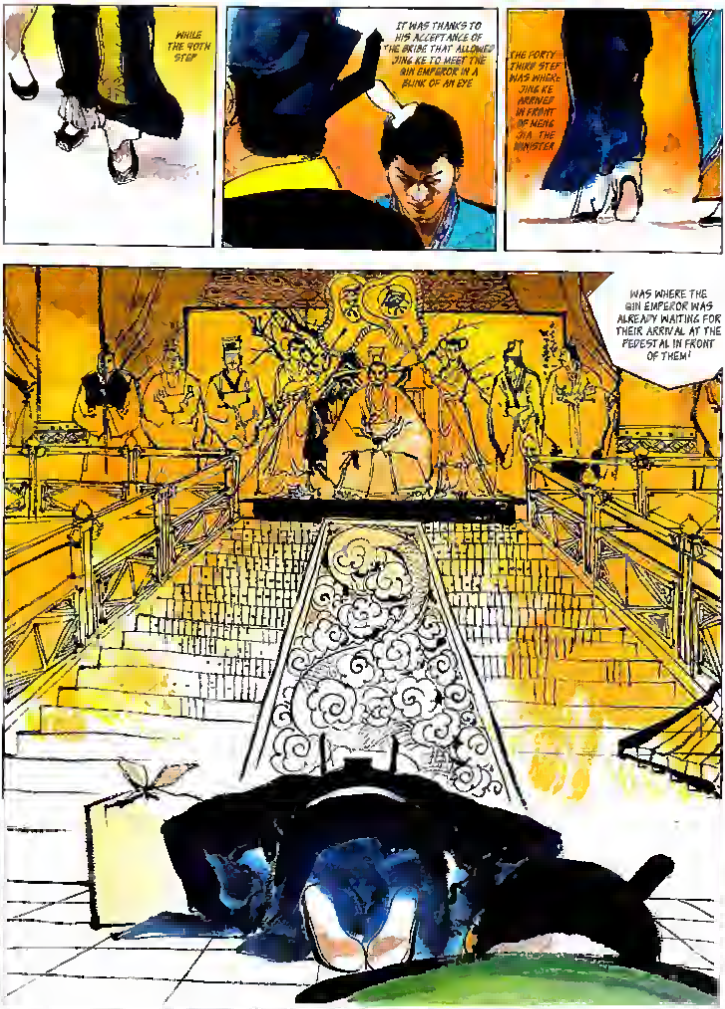
WHEN JING KE ARRIVED AT QIN COUNTRY, HE WAS TO PRESENT THE MAP OF DU HANG AND THE HEAD OF FAN YU QI, A BETRAYER OF QIN COUNTRY. THE QIN EMPEROR WAS IMPRESSED AND PREPARED EXPENSIVE GIFTS AS HE WAITED FOR JING KE'S ARRIVAL AT THE XIAN YANG CASTLE

JING KE AND QIN WU YANG, ONE BEHIND THE OTHER, MARCHED TOWARDS THE XIAN YANG CASTLE

EVEN THE STEPS WHICH JING KE WAS WALKING NOW WERE ALSO CALCULATED WITH DETAIL


JING KE AND QIN WU YANG KNEW NOT ONLY THE RIGHT WALL IN FRONT OF THE XIAN YANG CASTLE, THEY EVEN KNEW THE SEAT OF YING ZHEN, THE QIN EMPEROR EXTREMELY WELL

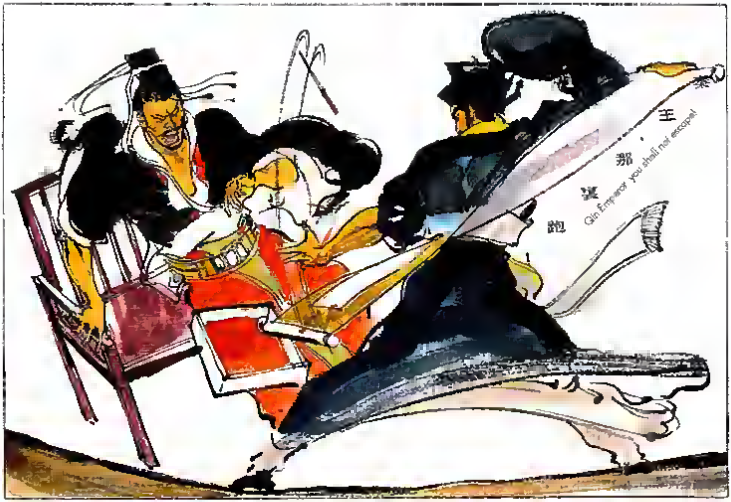
AS FOR THE ASSASSINATION PLAN THEY HAD PRACTICED IT MORE THAN A THOUSAND TIMES


WHILE THE 40TH STEP
IT WAS THANKS TO HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE BRIBE THAT ALLOWED JING KE TO MEET THE QIN EMPEROR IN A BLINK OF AN EYE
THE FORTY THIRD STEP WAS WHEN: JING KE ARRIVED IN FRONT OF MENG JIA, THE MINISTER
WAS WHERE THE QIN EMPEROR WAS ALREADY WAITING FOR THEIR ARRIVAL AT THE PEDESTAL IN FRONT OF THEM!

THE ASSASSINATION PLAN IS BEING CARRIED OUT SMOOTHLY. IF ONLY GOD WOULD LAY PITY ON YAN COUNTRY! THERE SHALL BE NO DOUBT THAT THE QIN EMPEROR WILL DIE
IT'S LUCKY THAT THE QIN EMPEROR DID NOT INVESTIGATE FAN YU QI'S INTENTION TO GRANT PRINCE DAN OF YAN COUNTRY'S WISH TO ASSASSINATE THE QIN EMPEROR. BECAUSE OF THAT, HE HAD A GRACEFUL DEATH. HIS FACE SHOWS A PEACEFUL EXPRESSION RATHER THAN BEING FILLED WITH REGRETS OF BEING EXECUTED
HA... FAN YU QI DIED A GREAT DEATH!
QIN WU YANG HAS NEVER SEEN SUCH A SITUATION BEFORE SO HE UNEXPECTEDLY LOST THE MANNERS HE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE WHEN SEEING THE EMPEROR
THIS IS BAD!
?

ALRIGHT, PRESENT THE MAP TO ME!
I PLEAD FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S FORGIVENESS AND PLEASE DO ALLOW US TO COMPLETE OUR DUTY AS ENVOYS
VICE ENVOY QIN IS A RUSTIC FROM AN ETHNIC MINORITY ALONG THE NORTHERN BORDER. HE HAS NEVER SEEN THE EMPEROR BEFORE. THAT'S WHY HE'S TREMBLING IN FRIGHT
QIN WU YANG'S REACTION HAD ALMOST CAUSED THE ASSASSINATION PLAN TO FAIL AT THE LAST ATTEMPT. LUCKILY JING KE'S STEADINESS IN THE CASE REPLACED THE DANGER THEY WERE FACING.
HA
HA
HE WAS READY TO ASSASSINATE THE QIN EMPEROR ALL BY HIMSELF!
DESPITE THAT, JING KE WAS STILL AS CALM AS A FLOWING RIVER WHILE HE MARCHED FORWARD TO THE PEDESTAL
WAS ALL LEFT TO JING KE ALONE
HOWEVER, THE ORIGINAL PLAN IN WHICH QIN WU YANG WAS SUPPOSED TO HOLD ON THE EMPEROR WHILE JING KE FORCED THE LATTER TO RETURN THE LAND OF ZHU HOU

WHEN THE MAP OF
FU HANG WAS ALMOST
COMPLETELY REVEALED
A DAGGER APPEARED AT
THE END OF THE MAP


王那裏跑
Gin Emperor, you shall not escape!

sfx. Tearl

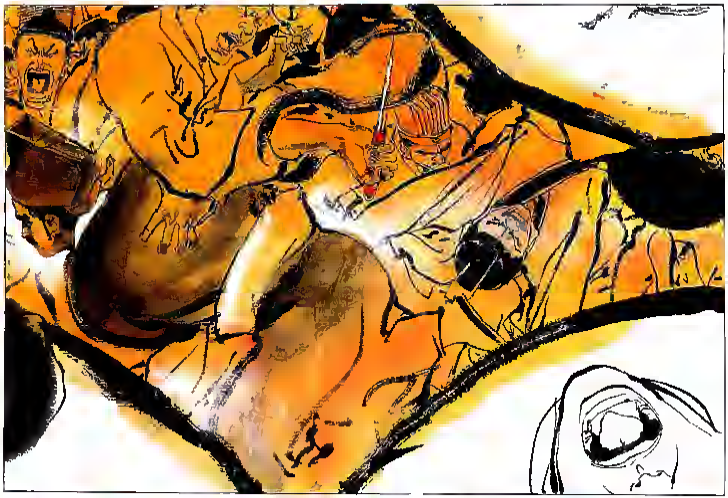
AS THE GIN EMPEROR FLUNG HIS ARM BACK, HIS HUGE COTTON SLEEVE WAS TORN IN HALF!
RIP!

AN ASSASSIN!

THE EMPEROR!
ACCORDING TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS IN QIN COUNTRY, THE MINISTER WHO GUARDS ON THE PEDESTAL IS NOT ALLOWED TO BE ARMED WITH ANY WEAPON. THIS PROVIDED JING KE TIME TO ATTACK THE QIN EMPEROR.
EMPEROR!
WHILE THE GUARDS IN RED ARMOR WERE ASSEMBLED BELOW THE PEDESTAL, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ORDER FROM THE EMPEROR, THEY WERE AFRAID TO TAKE A STEP UP TO THE PEDESTAL.
THE QIN EMPEROR WAS NERVOUSLY RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE, AND HAD NO TIME TO PASS ORDERS TO THE GUARDS

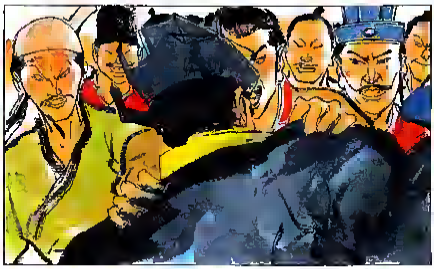
BECAUSE THE MINISTERS WERE NERVOUS AND IN A HURRY AND THEY DID NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO FIGHT WITH AGAINST JING KE. THEY FOUGHT HIM WITH BARE HANDS
EVEN BEFORE DEATH, HE WAS TOO AFRAID TO EVEN MOVE AN INCH
POOR QIN WU YANG WAS TRAMPLED TO DEATH
THE RULES OF THE QIN DYNASTY WERE EXTREMELY STRICT. IF THE QIN EMPEROR DIED EIGHT OR NINE OUT OF THE TEN MINISTERS WOULD BE FORCED TO DIE WITH THE EMPEROR OUT OF FEAR OF THIS RULE. THE MINISTERS BLOCKED JING KE'S PATH USING THEIR BODIES WITHOUT CONSIDERING THEIR OWN SAFETY

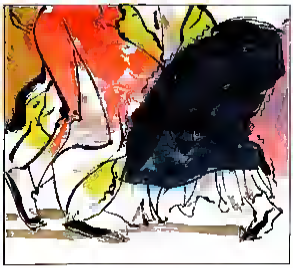
THE WALL BUILT OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE SEPARATED JING KE AND THE QIN EMPEROR. IT WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT JING KE'S ATTEMPT WOULD FAIL AT THIS STAGE
WU
WU
WU
BEING A SHORT PERSON WITH A LONG SWORD THE EMPEROR COULDN'T GET HIS SWORD OUT OF ITS CASING
HAVING THE PROTECTION OF THE MINISTERS' HUMAN BUILT WALL, THE EMPEROR STILL WISHED TO WIELD HIS SWORD TO PROTECT HIMSELF



A SIGN OF PAIN PASSED INTO HIS HEART. JING KE CLEARLY HEARD THE NOISE OF HIS SHOULDER BONE CRACKING.

WUU

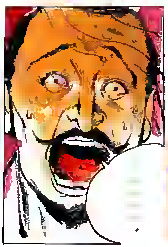


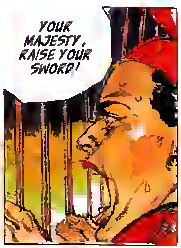


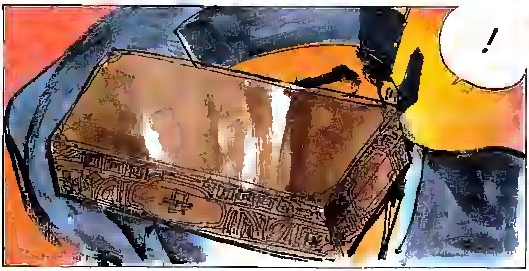
JING KE RAN OUT OF ENERGY MORE THAN TEN PEOPLE UNLEASHED THEIR ENERGY THROWING JING KE INTO THE AIR
WHAT PLAN WOULD JING KE, WHO JUMPED ONTO THE BEAM, THINK OF NOW?

THE GREAT JING KE CUT OFF THE HUGE BEAM AND RUSHED TOWARDS THE PEDESTAL WITH A MIGHTY POSE.

sfx: Wa!
sfx: ah!
sfx: Wa!
AH!




YOUR MAJESTY, RAISE YOUR SWORD!



Whr. Clang!
WA!
AS THE QIN EMPEROR WAVED HIS SWORD WITH POWER, THE LEFT LEG OF POOR JING KE WAS TERRIBLY CUT OFF

sfx: Del
JING KE ENDURED THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE SWORD AND UNLEASHED HIS LAST ATTACK WHILE ENDURING THE PAIN
sfx: Ah!
sfx: Wa!
HH
IT WAS BECAUSE I WANTED TO RETURN A FAVOR TO THE YAN COUNTRY'S PRINCE DAN, NOT BECAUSE THAT I DO NOT POSSESS THE ABILITY TO KILL YOU!
EMPEROR QIN, MY ASSASSINATION FAILED BECAUSE I WANTED TO MIMIC *CAO MO'S INTIMIDATION OF PRINCE HUAN AND OBTAIN YOUR OATH TO RETURN THE DUKE'S LANDS.

*See Cao Mo's story from Chapter 1

JING KE
30 YEARS OLD
AN ENVOY
A CITIZEN OF WEI COUNTRY

HE ONCE DISCUSSED THE SWORD ARTS WITH GE NIE IN YAN COUNTRY, THE CITIZENS ADDRESSED HIM AS JING MINISTER

Jing Ke was a citizen of Wei, although he had a Qi ancestry. He moved to Wei country and adopted the name Qing shi. Then he left to Yan country where he was known as Jing shi.

Translation note

shi, an honorific, used when the addressee is dear to the speaker. Also an honorific used by officials at the time. For poor people, the honorific mean tage are measured, given Jing Ke a possible heritage (read below).

Jing Ke was said to be a descendent of Official Qing (卿), but when Official Qing was ousted by enemies, he changed his name to Ke. Upon moving to Wei, he changed his surname to Jing, which sounds similar to his original surname Qing.

Wei Yuan Jun, he has been a source of means to monarch. Wei Yuan Jun was the monarch of Wei during the time. Hence the country was named after him.

As an avid reader and practitioner of the fencing arts, Jing-shi pitched his skills to Wei Yuan Jun, but Wei Yuan Jun did not use them. Later, Qin conquered Wei and established an eastern country there, and Wei Yuan Jun and his close relatives were moved to Yewang.

Translation note

燕 a different country from 卫, where Jing Ke traveled. However, [illegible] in other names are borrowed possibly from changed ar Wei. 卫 country had been destroyed, so re by 燕, but was revived only with the term 燕国 (燕 means ch). The reason 卫 could be revived was because Wei Yuan Jun was the son in law of the 燕 monarch. Disappeared with the annihilation of 燕.

Jing Ke had once passed through Yuci and discussed the sword arts with Ge Nie, but Ge Nie directed a ferocious glare at him. After Jing Ke left, someone suggested that he should call Jing-shi back. Ge Nie said "He said something inappropriate while discussing the sword arts with me, so I glared at him. Try his house, but he should be gone and not dare to linger." He sent someone to the owner of Jing Ke's accommodation to enquire about him, but Jing-shi had already left Yuci by carriage. When the envoy reported his findings, Ge Nie said, "Since he left, he must have been frightened of my glare just now."

Jing Ke travelled around Handan. Lu Jo Jian played a game of Liu with him, but got into a dispute over the score. Lu Jo Jian rebuked him angrily and Jing Ke ran away without a word, and so they never met again.

Translation note

Liu博 (literally "gambling") is an ancient type of two player board game. Each player has 6 pieces (jiaozi 角子) and a throw of dice (generally 4 and five sided). There are two variants of the game, da liu and xiao liu, which means large liu and small liu. I'm not too sure which variant they are talking about, since both variants were known to play in Jing Ke's time.

Da liu is more similar to chess, where the game is won by killing the opponent's general, while xiao liu players compete on how many points they can score via flipping. (I bet you not there are river fish pieces in water, but can give players points.) Game play is a little complicated, but not any understanding. It involves throwing three flung rectangular blocks with four sides, after which the numbers facing side (called edges) which determines how many moves a player can make.

Source: http://zh.gmw.cn/newsweb/read.php?id=2222&extra=page%3D1&page=3

When Jing Ke arrived at Yan, he became good friends with Gao Jian Li, a Yan dog butcher who enjoyed playing zhu. Jing Ke loved drinking wine and he would drink with Gao Jian Li everyday. When they became tipsy, Gao Jian Li would tap his zhu and Jing Ke would sing and accompany him on the streets. One minute they would be laughing, the next they would be crying, as though there was not a single mood about them. Although he was an alcoholic, he was a man with great depths, a steady head and a love for books. In his travels across all the principalities and dukedoms, all the people he mingled with were seniors with great virtue and ability. While in Yan country, he was treated very well by Tian Guang, a Yan citizen who refused official dom despite his high virtues and ability, as he knew that he was no ordinary man.

TN

Zhu, as we are not sure, is an instrument with 5 strings, it is played using a hammer. The Western equivalent would be the piano (except of course, the piano uses a much more sophisticated mechanism).

*Seniors, older people carried more weight in China at the time, and the age hierarchy was very prominent in society. In other words, Jing Ke met up with a lot of respectable people and travels

Jing Ke

Soon after he and the Yan Prince Dan, a hostage of Qin, had fled back to the Prince Dan was once held hostage by Zhao country while the Qin king, Ying Zheng, was born in Zhao and had been good friends with Ying when Zheng became the Qin king, Dan became the hostage of Qin. The Qin king was infuriated to Prince Dan, and Dan left the country and returned home in fury. When he returned, he sought for a way to get back at the Qin king, but his country was small and feeble.

The Qin sent troops everyday to Shandong to wage war against Qi, Chu and San Jin, slowly gnawing away at the princedoms like a silk worm at a mulberry leaf. As the precipice of war drew close to Yan, the Yan monarch and his subjects feared for the worst. Anxious about this, Prince Dan consulted with his tutor Tu Wu.

Wu replied, "Qin's lands are vast, blanketing everything under the Heavens. They are threatening Han, Wei and Zhao. To the north, it has clear waters that are secured by a valley. To the south, it has fertile land fed by Rivers Jing and Wei. It possesses the wealth of the Ba and Han prefectures. Its right border is protected by the Long and Shu mountain ranges. Its left shielded by Mount Yao and the Han valley. It is populous, its troops are skilled, and it has an abundance of armoury and war equipment. If Qin so wishes, not a single place south of the Great Wall and north* of the River Yi will be safe from its ambitions. Why spark the Qin king's temper** for the sake of your humiliation?" Dan said, "What's past is past, so what should we do now?" He replied, "Please give me some time to consider."

* By north, he means Yan country.
** Lit. touch the Qin king's throat scales, as to allegorically regend touching a dragon's throat scales would anger the dragon.

Some time later, the Qin general, Fan Wu Ji, offended the Qin monarch and fled to Yan, where he was taken in by the Prince. Tu Wu scolded him, saying, "You cannot destroy the Qin king, a heinous man by nature, more reason to be angry at Yan is enough to chill the heart of any man. What more if he bears of General Fan's presence here? This is what people call laying down meat on a path of a hungry tiger; there will be no hope of rescue from the impending disaster! Even if we have Guan and Yan on our side, they would not be able to come up with any solutions for you, Prince. I humbly ask that General Wu be sent to the Huns with all haste, so as not to give the Qin king reason to invade. Please arrange with San Jin and Nan, together with Qi, Chu and Bei, to strike an alliance with Chan Yu, only then can you think of ways to fight Qin."

Prince Dan said, "Grand Tutor, your plan will take too long. My heart is in great turmoil, and I fear I cannot wait even a second longer. Besides, it is not only for this reason that I cannot accept your plan. General Wu had no place to run to and sought refuge at my place. I cannot abandon this friend whose plight I sympathise with just because of the powerful threat of Qin. The moment I send him to the Huns will be the death of me. Please rethink this matter, Grand Tutor."

Tu Wu said, "Desiring safety yet taking dangers, asking for good fortune yet creating catastrophe, holding deep grudges without any schemes in mind, ignoring the disaster that will be brought down on this country for the sake of a freshly made friendship. This is called nurturing grudges which encourage disaster. Goose feathers set on the stove will without fail burn away to nothing.* And we are speaking of Qin, fierce as a bird of prey. Must I say anymore about the fury of the cruel hatred that will be unleashed upon us? There is a teacher, Tian Guang, in Yan country. He is a person with deep intellect and great courage. You can discuss matters with him." The prince said, "Can you arrange for me to meet up with Teacher Tian?" Tu Wu said, "As you wish, my prince." He left to see Teacher Tian and told him, "The Prince wishes to discuss a national matter with you." Tian Guang said, "I hear and obey." And so he went to pay the prince a visit.

TN:
Wu Wu li: Fan Yu Qi
Tian Guang: Jing Ke
Yan Yan Yan: 燕燕燕
Yan Yu (燕于): Yan is the ruler of the Huns
Goose feathers: Yu Yun dian ming, a popular term for Yan country. Literally swallow country. Fact: the goose feathers in the stove are the fury of Qin in other words, Yan's powerless before Qin.

* As you wish, my prince." I comply with your wishes. Except the proper phrase to say is, "As you please," and not "as you wish" at the moment.

The prince gave him a warm welcome, back-pedalling to lead the way and kneeling to brush the dust off his chair. When Tian Guang was settled in his seat and there was no one around, the prince left his seat and said, "Teacher, know that Yan and Qin cannot co-exist." Tian Guang said, "I heard that in its prime, a fine stallion can run a thousand li in a day. When it is elderly, even an inferior horse can surpass it. Now the prince has heard of me in my prime, but does not know that my vivacity has faded. Although I dare not part capable in planning national matters, my dear friend, Jing Ke, would be suited for this role." The prince said, "May I request that I meet Jing Ke through Teacher?" Tian Guang answered, "As you wish, my prince."

He stood up immediately and hastened out respectfully with small steps. The prince escorted him to the door, then warned, "What I have told you and what you have said are all important national matters. Please do not divulge them to anyone." Tian Guang bowed and chuckled, "I understand." He travelled to see Jing Ke, bunching his back all along the way and said, "There is not a single soul in Yan who does not know of our friendship. The Prince had heard of tales of me in the prime of my life, unaware that I am no longer adequate to the task. I was honoured to learn from him. Teacher, know that Yan and Qin cannot co-exist. Since we are friends, I took the liberty of recommending you to the Prince, and I would like you to pay the Prince a visit at his palace. Jing Ke, I solemnly accept your instructions," Tian Guang said. "I have heard that grown adults must never let people become suspicious of them. Now that the Prince has told me, 'What I have told you and what you have said are all important national matters. Please do not divulge them to anyone.' It means he suspects me. Someone who creates suspicion when handling matters is not man of integrity or honour." Hoping to use his suicide to inspire Jing Ke, he said, "Please hurry to the Prince and tell him that I am dead, as proof that my lips are sealed." Thus he slit his own throat and died.

TN:
The prince is behaving in a groveling fashion.
** Yi dian, literally "one vexed bone" (一點). I believe it has something to do with bone, blood and a "bone disease." I am unsure. I'll need more data about this particular term.

Jing Ke went to see the Prince and informed him that Tian Guang was already dead. He conveyed his last words. The Prince moved over, kneeled and crawled forward on his knees, weeping sorrowfully. After some time passed, he said, "I first told Teacher Tian about our secret because I thought our plans would succeed. I did not wish for Teacher Tian to die in order to prove his silence." Jing Ke resumed his seat, and the Prince likewise. Stagnated position and kowtowed, saying, "Teacher Tian knew not of my callousness, for a beast of burden is dared not to question the whip, but can appear before me! Let the Heavens show compassion and not abandon me completely!"

Today, Qin possesses greedy ambitions and his desires will never be satisfied until all the lands are under his control, and he has made servants of all the kings of the kingdoms. As of now, Qin has already imprisoned the Han King, took all his lands, and has also rallied troops south to fight Chu, north towards Zhao. Wang Jian has led tens of thousands of men to River Zhang and the Ye country, while Li King has taken troops to Tai Yuan and Yuan Zhong. Zhao cannot fend off Qin and will definitely have to surrender. Once it does that, disaster will descend upon Yan. Yan is small and weak, and the number of troops has often been a troubling factor in war. Judging from this, even including the entire country will not be sufficient to fight off Qin. All the princedoms and dukedoms fear Qin, and none dare to ally together.

I have a foolish plan. If I could gather great warriors from across the land and send them to Qin, using great wealth as bait for Qin, the Qin King will definitely be greedy and then the stage will be set. It would be wonderful if we can hold the Qin King under duress and force him to return all the conquered lands, just as Cao Mo did with Qi Huan Gong. If we cannot, then we shall assassinate him. With the generals leading troops outside of the country and turmoil within, the officials in Qin will begin to have suspicions. In the meantime, the princedoms and dukedoms will unite, and with that, Qin will definitely be defeated.

This is my greatest wish, but I do not know who to entrust this duty to. I hope that Jing Ke will consider this matter carefully." After a long while, Jing Ke said, "This is a very important national matter, while I am but a lowly servant. I fear I am not qualified for this." The prince bowed his head, refusing to let Jing Ke push the story onto someone else, and obtained his agreement. And thus the prince respectfully bestowed upon Jing Ke the title of High Minister and the best of the best accommodation. Everyday, the prince would visit his quarters, providing exquisite meals, offering curios, giving Jing Ke as many carriages and beautiful women as he desired in order to make him as happy as possible.

* orphaned (孤). Since Yan's father was still alive at the time, he is possible that his writer had made a mistake, or that they used 孤 to mean lowly, appropriate to the author or the time.

A long time after Jing Ke still did not show any intention of acting. The Qin general, Wang Jian, had broken past the defences of the Zhao capitol, taken the Zhao king prisoner, and sent all his lands sending troops north to take over lands until they reached the southern border of Yan. Prince Yan was terrified, and so he pleaded with Jing Ke. The Qin troops will cross the waters of River Yi sometime between dawn and dusk. At that time, even if I would like to spend longer attending to you, how will I be able to do it?* Jing Ke said, "Even if Your Highness had said nothing, I would have requested to act. If I went to Qin now, I have nothing that would make him trust me, so I want to be able to approach the Qin King. The Qin King placed a thousand-jin gold bounty across all principalities on General Fo Tai's head. If I can obtain General-Fan's head and the map of Du Kang, in Yan, and offer these two the Qin King, the Qin King will definitely wish to meet me, and only then will I be able to repay you." The prince said, "General Fan came to me because he had nowhere else to go. I cannot bear hurting this venerable elder for my own interests. Please think of other ways."

Jing Ke knew the prince was soft-hearted, so he privately met Fan Yu Qi and said, "One can say Qin has been very cruel to you, General. Your parents and family have all been executed. Recently, I have been hearing about the 1000-jin gold bounty on your head, put out to all principalities. What do you intend to do?" Yu Qi looked up at the sky, sighed, and said tearfully, "Every time I think of it, I hurt to the bone, but I cannot think up of anything!" Jing Ke said, "There is one sentence that can cure the Yan country of its silliness and exact revenge for you. What do you think of it?" Yu Qi lunged forward, saying, "How?" Jing Ke said, "I would like to bring your head to present it to the Qin King. He will definitely be delighted to meet me, and I shall grab his sleeve with my left hand, and stab his chest with the dagger in my right. With that, your revenge will be exacted, and shame of Yan country be negated. Do you feel the same way?" Fan Yu Qi, wanted off one side of his robes, baring his shoulder, then clasped his wrist.* He stepped closer. Jing Ke said, "It is only because this grudge that has had me grinding down my teeth in fury, bursting my heart with its rage. This is the reason why I shall listen to you today!" And so he cut his throat. When the prince learned of this, he rushed over in his carriage and sprawled on the corpse, crying and exceedingly sorrowful. However, since this could not be undone, Fan Yu Qi's head was sealed up in a box (*an action signifying anger).

The prince had already looked for the sharpest dagger of all lands, and had found the dagger of Yu Tu Ren of Zhao country. He had bought this for a hundred gold, and had his craftsmen temper it in poison. When tested on people, it killed without fail as long as even a bead of blood was drawn. So he made preparations to send off Jing Ke. There was a warrior called Qin Wu Yang, in Yan, who had started killing people from age thirteen, and no one dared to look at him directly. So he assigned Qin Wu Yang to be his assistant. Jing Ke waited for someone who was planning to travel with him. This person lived far away, and had not yet arrived, but Jing Ke had already prepared the baggage. After a few days, Jing Ke had not yet left. The prince thought he was delaying the journey, suspecting that he was regretting his choice, and wheedled again, "We don't have much time left. Does Jing Qing have any intention to go? Please allow me to send Qin Wu Yang first." Jing Ke became angry and rebuked the prince, "What does Your Highness mean, sending him off like this? Someone who only cares about going but not coming back is but an immature child. Besides, we will be carrying a dagger into the immeasurably strong Qin country. The reason that I stay is because I am waiting for a friend with my friend. Since your Highness thinks that I am delaying the journey, then I shall take my leave!" And so he set off.

When the prince and guests learned of this matter, everyone wore white cloth caps and white hairpins to send Jing Ke off. At the northern shore of River Yi and after a farewell dinner, they took to the road. Gao Jian Li tapped his chord. Jing Ke sang, as accompaniment in sorrowful tones.** All the gathered wept, sing-ing as they walked forward. The sound of the blowing wind, the coldness of the water from Yi River. Once the brave soldier sets off, there shall be no returning home! In replying the tone became passionate*** the gathered people glared, and their hairs stood up in such anger that they propped up their hats.**** And so Jing Ke left on a carriage, not looking back even once.

* see TN for the beginning section.
** sorrowful tones in the Fei key, which is bleak and sorrowful.
*** passionate, in the Yu key, which is restrained and stirring.
**** a Chinese "proverb" for how angry Jing Ke was, in conjunction with another slightly less violent one.

Once they reached Qin. Jing Ke brought gifts worth thousands of gold and presented these lavish gifts to the Qin king's favorite [illegible] second concubine. Meng Jia. he spoke in the stead of Jing Ke before the Qin king, saying. "The Yan King is indeed quaking in awe of Your Majesty's power. he does not dare mobilize his men to resist your army and has asked the entire country to serve under you. Compared to the other dukedoms and princedoms. the tax system is the most similar to those implemented by officials directly under your command. such that he dares and presumes to present ancestral shrine dedicated to you. Because he is terrified. he does not dare to personally come to present these in person. Humbly presents Fan Yu Qi's head and the map of Du Kang in Yan. both of which are to sealed boxes. The Yan king even conducted a ceremony of sending off ceremony in court. and sent our emissaries to explain this situation to your Majesty. We now await your Majesty's instruction."

The Qin king was extremely upset. Knowing this would be different from his customary rituals. he ordered the preparations for the nine bronze tripods and the Yan emissaries in the Yan Yang Palace. Jing Ke held the box with Fan Yu Qi's head, while Qin Wu Yang held the box containing the map and they entered in this order. At the stairs Qin Wu Yang's expression became one of terror. possibly [illegible] the garbed officials. Jing Ke turned to give Wu Yang a smile. then stepped up front. apologizing. He is a crude from an ethnic minority along the northern border and has never seen the emperor before. that's why he's trembling in fright. I plead for Your Majesty's forgiveness so we may complete our duty as envoys. The Qin king said to Ke. "Take the map Wu Yang is holding."

Jing took the map and showed it to the Qin king. who unrolled the map. and at the very end of the scroll. the dagger appeared. Jing Ke then seized the Qin king's sleeve with his left hand. while his right thrust the dagger forward. Before the dagger could reach him. the Qin king swayed and scrambled to his feet in shock. ripping his sleeve. He tried to draw his sword. but because it was long. he only grabbed the scabbard. In that moment of panic. the sword remained firmly in the scabbard. so he could not pull it out. Immediately. Jing Ke chased the king and the Qin king ran around the pillar. All the assembled officials were dumbfounded. and because it happened so suddenly. they lost their composure.

According to Qin law. no official serving in court was allowed to bear weapons on their person. the guards and officials bearing arms were ordered to enter court without orders from his Majesty. In the moment of danger. he didn't have enough time to order soldiers in. which was why Jing Ke was able to chase after the Qin king. And in their fear and urgency. his servants could only fight together bare handedly. with no one with which to strike at Ke. At this moment. the attendant doctor. Xia Wu Ju hurled the weapon case he was holding at Jing Ke. The king was still running around the pillar. while the servants panicked. not knowing when was a good time. and those around the king said. "Your Majesty carry the sword on your back!" He placed the sword at his back and was able to draw it out and attack Jing Ke. and chopped off his left leg. Jing Ke was crippled. and threw his own dagger at the Qin king. but it missed and hit a bronze pillar. This Qin king lessened attacks on Ke. and Ke received eight cuts. Jing Ke knew he could not possibly succeed on his own. and straddled the column with a laugh. spreading before him in the shape of a dustpan and retorted. "The reason why I did not succeed was because I intended to capture you alive. so I can obtain the agreement to repay the Prince." Then the people around him closed in and killed Jing Ke. and the Qin King remained unhappy for a long while after. After assessing the situation. he treated officials who were rewarded and those who were guilty different. and he granted Xia Wu Ju two hundred yi of gold. saying. "It is only because Wu Ju loves me that he threw his medicine case at Jing Ke."

As the Qin king in his fury sent more troops to Zhao and ordered Wang Jian's army to attack Yan. In the tenth month. Li City fell. Then Qin Shi Huang. At the Yan prince Dan and others led a retreat with their finest troops east to protect Liao Dong. The Qin general Li Shin was on the heels of the Yan King. and he wrote a letter to the Yan king in the stead of Wang Jian, which said. "The reason why Qin is in such a hurry to chase after the Yan troops is because of the Yan Prince. If you kill Dan and offer his head to the Qin king, the Qin king, will understand and your country will be spared a bloodbath. After this Li Shin chased after Dan, and Dan concealed himself in the river Yan. Then the Yan King sent one of his men to behead Prince Dan intending to present it to Qin. Qin resumed its invasion. Five years later, Qin annihilated Yan and took the Yan King, Xi, prisoner.

The next year, Qin conquered all the lands and named himself Emperor. And then Qin hunted for those who assisted Prince Dan and Jing Ke who all fled. Gao Jian Li changed his name and worked as a clerk in a wine shop. hiding in a place called Song Zi. Long after, while toiling away, he heard that a visitor of the owner's patrons played the zhu and played back and forth unwilling to leave. He would frequently say, "There are places he plays well, and places where he doesn't." One of the attendants reported this to the owner, saying, "One of your workers knows music, but he denies it." The owner's wife ordered Gao Jian Li to play the zhu before her, and everyone seated praised his playing, and offered him wine. Gao Jian Li fretted that he would spend forever concealing his identity and living at the mercy of his employer, so he left. He took out his zhu and presentable clothing from his trunk, then presented himself again, having changed his appearance. The seated customers were all surprised, and left their seats and treated him like an equal, calling him a distinguished guest. He then tapped his zhu and sang, and there was not a single person who left without tears running down their faces. People in Song Zi successively invited him over as a guest, and news of this reached Qin Shi Wang*. Qin Shi Wang ordered to see him, and someone recognised him and said, "He is Gao Jian Li." The Qin emperor, pitying the waste of his good zhu skills, gave him special pardon and only blinded him. He had him play the zhu, and never once said his playing was poor. Gradually approaching him, Gao Jian Li placed a piece of lead into the zhu and once again closed in on him, then raised the zhu to strike down on the Qin emperor, but he missed. And so the Qin emperor had Gao Jian Li put to death, and never since allowed anyone from other dukedoms and princedoms approach him again.

* Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇) – Means First Emperor of Qin. As this is the most common way of referring to this historical character, I shall leave this untranslated.

Once Lu Ju Jian heard about Jing Ke's assassination attempt on the Qin king, he said to himself, "Sigh, what a pity he was not well studied in the art of fencing! Oh! I do not understand it! After being rebuked by me in the past, he thought I was not compatible with him!

"As Shi Gong* says, 'When people discuss about Jing Ke, once they reached the part on Prince Dan's fate, they say "Grain will fall from the Heavens like rain, and horses will grow horns"[1] which is over the top. They also say that Jing Ke hurt the Qin king, but this all is untrue. I spoke to Gongsun Li Gong, Shang Dong, and Xia Wu Ju, who knew about this, and what they told me is the same as what I have recorded. The first people from Cao Mo to Jing Ke, their chivalrous acts may or may not be successful, but their ambitions were clear, and they did not betray their own sense of justice. Their names will be passed down the generations. How could this be fabricated?!"

* Tai Shi Gong (太史公) – also known as Sima Qian, the writer of Shiji (this article is an extract of this work)

[1] A Chinese saying. The English equivalent would be 'pigs will fly'

Assassin Story

Chapter 5 (End)

Chapter 5
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So, this is the official end of Assassin Story. We hope you have enjoyed reading this as we did scanlating it! We encourage you to read the last few pages and all of the notes after each chapter as our translator Elkin did a wonderful job of translating these 4 pages which were also written in an ancient Chinese diction. Stay tuned for some extra stories and the next manhua! Thanks for reading.

Are you eager for other manhua from Domo Scans? Or rather manga? We are recruiting translators (Japanese preferred Chinese if you are interested in manhua projects) editing staff one proofreader and a quality checker! (As of April 27, 2009)

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